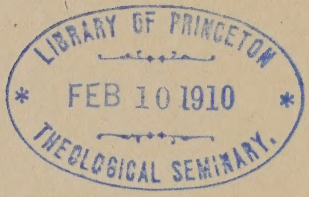
THE SOUL OF A TURK



Division DR428

Section .D5

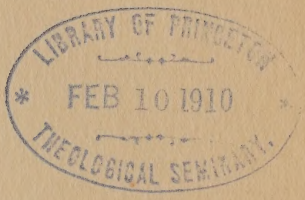
THE SOUL OF A TURK

HASSAN

THE SOUL OF A TURK

BY VICTORIA DE BUNSEN

WITH EIGHT FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
REPRODUCED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS



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TO

CHARLES RODEN BUXTON

MY BROTHER AND FRIEND

INTRODUCTION

I HAVE tried in this book to gather up a few of the fragments that remain after five separate journeys in the Near and Middle East. These journeys led me through very various countries, but they were all included in what was, once at least, the Turkish Empire. Two of them took me through both the travelled and the little-known parts of Palestine, Syria, and the "other side Jordan." The third, and longest, with which most of the papers in this book are concerned, was taken in company with one friend* only, and led me across Asia Minor, through the Taurus Mountains, across Mesopotamia to the Tigris, down the river by raft to Baghdad, and home across the Syrian desert to Damascus and Egypt. Two shorter journeys—the one through parts of Bulgaria, the other through Macedonia—complete the five. On the two first and the two last journeys I was one of a small party including men relations. The degree of personal security and comfort thus secured were certainly higher, but undoubtedly they acted as something of barriers to any real intimacy with the natives we travelled

* My friend is here referred to as "Y." She is Mrs. Wilkins, the author of a narrative description of this journey entitled *By Desert Ways to Baghdad*, published by T. Fisher Unwin.

with or visited. On the third journey, we had no Englishmen to fight our battles, settle our plans, and bully our refractory caravan, no Cook and Son to cater and undertake for us, no dragoman to interpret our wants, no rainproof tents to make unnecessary the frequent hospitality of the people, no commissariat to make us independent of native supplies, no settled plans, no immovable dates to tie us, no binding engagements to bring us home. This journey, in consequence, was richest in experiences, in friendships, in common human pleasures. It was not so pleasant from the tourist's point of view; it was far more interesting to the lover of his kind.

Looking back over these journeys in uncivilised places, I observe that though a great deal of the detail that made up the daily adventure of the caravan life has faded from my mind, including most of the names of villages where we camped, the distances of the march, and the information we gleaned, I do not forget the people I met and made friends with. Some of them stand out in my memory as friends made for life. It is not likely that I shall see many of them again, but if I do I shall need no introduction. We shall go on exactly where we left off. Antoine is one of these—a Maltese servant who travelled with us twice; a man whose sense of humour, at once so broad and so subtle, likened him to the gods. There was old Fellah, the magnificent sheikh of the Adwân Bedawin, whose slim figure in its rough brown *'abá* held wrapped about it the mystery of the desert and the ages.

Rejeb Minasian (Lieutenant) was another, with his

infinite benevolence and twinkling eyes—a man whose rigid Sunni orthodoxy could not weaken his Christian charity to all men. And there was Ibrahim, the simple Anatolian peasant, all gentleness and loyalty, like the typical unspoilt Turk he was. And Ali Chawush (Sergeant) the Kurdish officer, who belied the fierce traditions of his race by his tenderness to little children. And then there was Hassan, who more than any other interpreted the East to me.

But it was not these alone. It was from the common people I saw from day to day that I carried away a general impression of kindliness, of consideration, and of loyalty that will not lightly be forgotten. True, there were occasional lapses. Among the Kurds and the Armenians a late arrival in a village at night, a blustering *zaptieh* whom we had not sufficiently under our control, the large appetites of Turkish soldiers, occasionally led to words, and even blows, among the men. We were turned out of two *khans* one snowing Christmas Eve on the bleak uplands of Karabagtche, and the shelter we finally got in the mud hut of a Kurdish sheikh was enlivened by angry voices half the night. But to ourselves, soldier and shepherd, *khánji* (landlord) and *katirji* (muleteer) were kindly and courteous, and among the Turks and the Arabs no trouble was too great, no provocation too exasperating.

It was no doubt the human interest of travel that appealed to me—I wanted to make friends with the people. I wanted to break down the barriers that divided us, race from race, East from West. The long journey through Mesopotamia and Turkish

Arabia gave me special opportunities of coming into touch with the natives. This was largely owing to the absence of other Europeans on whom we could depend. But a much more potent cause was the fact that on this journey I happened to be interested in things which only a more or less close familiarity with the people themselves could reveal. These were the traces of primitive forms of religion as still found surviving among a semi-civilised people. I was not a student, and in the ritual and philosophy of the organised and highly developed religions of the world, I took no special scientific interest. But I cared much for the common origin, the common element of all religions, the element that unites them all and explains them all. The connection of the countries through which I travelled with the Old Testament, its "high places," its "green hills," its sacred waters, its "burning bush," gave them a peculiar fascination to me. The Hebrew element has gone, but that out of which it arose is there, persistent, living. It will not die yet.

None of my journeys have been undertaken with the object of collecting information about anything in particular. All that I learned was by the way. But I kept my eyes open where any evidence of religion or magic operations was concerned. As facts for scientific collation, such information would have been worth very little. I had not the knowledge, nor the time, that would have supplied the discrimination and accuracy necessary for such work. At the same time, I shared the wide scientific interest now taken in religion, as the expression of man's relation to the

supernatural. And it seemed to me that the earliest known forms of such expression—the striving of man's mind, as yet unshackled by the claims of revelation, the traditions of Churches, the desire for conformity, the authority of the hierarchies, whether of Islam, of Christianity, or of any other organised religion—were necessarily of greatest value. They had at least the merit of originality, of spontaneousness. There is something universal about them; they recur in countries as mentally and morally apart as primitive Greece of the tenth century B.C., and primitive Africa of to-day. The interest in these things was not wholly untouched by personal experience. The less co-ordinated one's own creed, the more chaotic and incongruous the elements that go to make it up, the more genuinely does one try to discover what seems to be any really spontaneous expression of the relationship of man to God.

Here, perhaps, in this world of vague and primitive thought, may light be thrown on the constituents of that relationship, on its possibility, its extent, its reality. Primitive man, has he no word to say on the subject?

The instinct to get behind all the great organised religions of the world, behind Buddhism and Islam and Christianity, to plant one's feet on a stratum below them all, a common soil where all have taken their roots, and out of which all spring, is a true and a natural instinct. What is that soil really like? Do any pure flowers grow there, or only weeds? Without the cultivation of the great religious systems, would

they choke themselves, or run riot? The desire for an answer warrants the search.

It was a satisfaction to find that my interest in the primitive religious life of the people was dependent on my capacity for establishing human and friendly relations with them. The two acted and reacted. My faulty knowledge of Turkish was a barrier to any quite reliable information by word of mouth. Besides, my blunt questions about the intimate habits and customs and opinions of the people would probably have been evaded. What they told me would have needed confirmation from many sources to which I had not access. Everything I learnt was through making personal friends with the people. I confided in them, I trusted myself to their loyalty, their kindness of heart. No third person came between us. There was no dragoman to make a barrier with his difference of race and religion. Hassan was in no sense a dragoman, for he could speak nothing but Turkish. He was one of themselves, a Moslem, taught in the village *mekteb* (school), untouched by Western civilisation, unconscious and certainly unashamed of the intellectual level of his country.

Hassan, moreover, was always conscious of being our host. In the remotest towns of the Empire, he would buy us *helva* (Turkish sweetmeat) or *baklava* in the bazaars like the proverbial "kind uncle," and, remonstrated with, would inquire, "But are you not my guests?" The solidarity of a race was abundantly exemplified in Hassan. He was one with his race, and accordingly he was always doing the honours

of his country; and with him *noblesse oblige*. This idea was obviously held by most of the people, savage or semi-civilised, with whom we came in contact. They were all our hosts; we must be treated with confidence, with loyalty, with trust. They must give us of their best in everything, the best in material things, lodging and food, and medical prescriptions for illness. Where these last failed, they must give us the assistance of their magic, their religion, their ancient mystic formulæ.

Hassan did not feel differently from the common people, but he was more conscious of his responsibilities to us and, through personal devotion, more anxious to testify it. So if I had a headache, he let me take my phenacetin and try all the prescriptions recommended by Western science, because not to do so would have implied contempt of them. But when they failed, as of course they always failed according to Hassan, he came forward with his own proposals, some magic recipe, some ritual act. He was confident they would succeed. So it happened that I was not only a witness of these things, I was myself a participant.

I took a personal share in the ritual acts of the people. After a touch of fever I was ceremonially purified by hair-cutting. For jaundice I drank the milk of a yellow cow. Against the evil eye I wore the blue bead. And when they saw that I did what they told me in all seriousness, they took me into their confidence. They felt I was one of themselves. They told me their experiences, they relied on my sympathy;

and thus, though I did not stay long among many of them, I came everywhere into very real and human relations with the people. My interest in these survivals of magic and religion brought me into touch with human hearts and lives, human aches and pains, human griefs and sorrows. That was their principal interest to me. The scientific interest was always subordinate. I attained my object; satisfied an instinct that was real if it was unreasoning.

And these experiences of travel through countries where social barriers, as we understand them, do not exist, have made me feel how much there is in common between us all, how we all are one at bottom; how flimsy a crust is all the education and civilisation that seems to divide us so completely into different classes, races, intellectual levels.

Once we get down to the roots of our life, the elemental feelings and aspirations, we are on common ground. To the soil where these roots are found we need no passport, no introduction. It is the superficial that makes the barriers. Different civilisations, different official religious systems, different forms of government, alienate and divide; the bed-rock of our life, be it physical or spiritual, unites.

It was Islam with its cold finger that separated me from the people. With that lofty creed, its simple, self-sufficing philosophy, its crude angles and its clear-cut definitions, I, the Christian of the twentieth century, could have little in common. But these primitive human aspirations, these inborn unreasoning beliefs, this inevitable flight to magic or to religion for help

in trouble—they drew us together. I understood, though I was puzzled. They stirred my heart though they did not convince my mind.

It was through these things that I got near to the people and felt I was one of themselves. A party of English people—a dragoman above all—would have prevented my feeling this. Even the *zaptiehs* were distressed a little, for they were conscious of the barriers that divide us in the West. But Hassan understood what I wanted, and he encouraged the people and the camp-servants to treat me as one of themselves. If I was ill, it was he who fetched the milk from the yellow cow, or tied the knotted string round my hand. In danger he stitched the blue bead on my coat. In his own unhappiness he confided in me, and told me of the desperate relapses into magic which he could not help but was half ashamed of. He brought the very poor people to me, and the timid, shy women. If a baby was ill in the river-village where we tied up for the night, or in the Arab tents where we encamped, he would persuade the mother to bring it to me in case I had *'iláj* (medicine) to cure it, or could improve on the recipes of the local *hoja*. If we passed a blind man on the road, he would call a halt and lead him to me. It was only later he learned I had no *'iláj* to cure blindness. I had not the faith of these people. Better they should trust to their sacred waters or their sacred tree.

Was I a fraud? Was I deceiving the people? Sometimes a panic seized me—I did not really believe a sacred tree could give a man sight. I did not really

unload my revolver because the blue bead was stitched on my coat. But then no more did Hassan.

It was just this inconsistency, this striving to make the most of two worlds, the material and the spiritual, that appealed to me. It was so human. It was just what I saw every day in the West, the civilised Christian West. Christians believe that only God can heal their sicknesses. But their whole trust and confidence is in the specialist. It is " Thou only that fightest for us," but the " Dreadnought " is essential to victory. The difference is only this—the West believes in the power of material means, believes with all its heart and mind. When these fail it remembers sometimes there are spiritual forces, a God whom it has forgotten, but it remembers without faith, hopelessly. The East believes absolutely and always in a spiritual world. When it does not succeed it turns in despair to material things. It is just beginning to believe there is something in them.

Neither East nor West has found the clue. Only some union, some reconciliation between the two, will find it. Then perhaps material and spiritual will signify no longer opposing forces, hostile, inconsistent.

Meanwhile, we were all in the dark. Life was no greater mystery to them than it was to me. No doubt they did find relief from their troubles by these old time-honoured means, these illogical beliefs. Was it for me to destroy the faith which I could not replace?

* * * * * *

When I think about the incidents I have described here, these quaint survivals of a primitive philosophy

that have impressed me, instinctively I seek for some connecting link between them, some common element that gives them a unity. But is it to be found? Does it exist, or are they disjointed fragments, isolated from each other, unconnected? The subjects dealt with are varied, and certainly, to all appearance, without connection. Beyond their primitive character they would seem to lack any coherence, any common element.

These are some of the ideas that inspire them. Here is the belief that evil, physical or moral, can be physically transferred; here is the trace of a blood covenant, of animism, of sun-worship, or of animal worship—some bits of pure sympathetic magic—the superposition of one cult upon another—a survival of Oriental ecstatic mysticism—of the elements of mourning in religion, the mourning for a suffering God, Adonis, Hussein, Jesus.

Some of these fragments belong to the sphere of magic, others to that of religion. Are the two spheres distinct? Scientists differ. But it is clear that before the world was very old both had become different expressions of one universal human instinct, the instinct which impels a man to try and lift the veil of the unseen, to enter into relations with the eternal that lies behind the temporal.

And to-day their object too among primitive peoples is the same. Almost exclusively, their operation is directed towards one goal, the alleviation of physical and material ills, the prevention of trouble and misfortune. To heal and to ward off, these are their

primary objects. Another is the increase of vegetation. In the case of magical charms, such as dancing, which are performed with the intention of stimulating and increasing the powers of vegetation, here too religion has undoubtedly taken root. Prayers and the invocation of divine aid are admittedly potent in operations of this kind. The dancing of David before the ark may suggest the embodying of a primitive fertility charm into the regular ritual of a religious festival. To-day the two are hopelessly and radically intertwined, the intention and goal of each irretrievably mixed. The dancing of the Mevlevi Dervishes is an obvious instance of this "contaminatio" of the two. In origin a magical dance to stimulate the natural growth of vegetation, it is now the medium for the ecstasy whereby communion with God is possible.

But other links than those of mere intention bind magic and primitive religion together. Both belong, as we have noticed already, to one category, man's relation to the supernatural, the unseen. And this instinct of man, to pierce behind the material, the actual, to come into contact with the spiritual, the ideal, is an instinct deep-rooted, part of his very constitution. It is as innate, as irresistible as any of the other great primitive instincts which at bottom form the structure of man's life on earth. Like hunger, sex, fear, it overrides the reason, masters the will.

Again, one characteristic is necessary to both equally, the quality of faith. This is recognised in religion. It is equally essential in magic. The men who perform magical operations regard their actions as in some sense

miraculous, abnormal. They have faith that what they cannot demonstrate and cannot understand will occur. This exercise of faith distinguishes these actions, often natural and trivial in themselves, from the simple acts of every day, such as cooking and eating, tilling and building.

There is but one characteristic of religion which to the untrained observer separates it very markedly and clearly from magic. That is the necessary intervention of a divine power. Between the performance of the act and the desired effect the action of a divine will is always involved. Magic, on the contrary, requires no such interposition. Its action is immediate and final, independent of any external medium. No third person, agent—call it what you will—is involved; its effect is direct.

* * * * * *

The countries included in the Turkish Empire are uniquely full of religious suggestion. There you may find, in close proximity to each other, an infinite variety of religious practices and beliefs. There is Christianity, with its endless variety of Churches, orthodox and heretical; Islam, both Sunni and Shiah; a variety of smaller but not less living creeds, half pagan indeed, but coloured both by Mohammed and Christ—Druse, Yezeedi, Sabæan, Ismaili, Kizil-bash. The Tigris valley itself is a veritable hotbed of warring creeds. Not only are traces of them to be found combined in one race—they exist, with complete indifference to logic, in the person of one man. Such a man was Hassan.

Nothing is new under the sun. Religious developments follow the same lines. It is obvious that in every age the same old ideas struggle for expression, the same questionings demand an answer, the same religious forms recur. If we look around us to-day and observe all the varied forms in which these ideas are expressing themselves in the twentieth-century West, we shall discover their seeds, their dim, far-off origins, in primitive creeds, long since flung off and trampled on by the warriors of the great world-religions. One by one these ideas that we call modern occur to our minds. They are in the air of our age. We think they are the outcome of our mental atmosphere. But long ages ago they were embodied in primitive ritual. To-day in religious philosophy we meet them again. The doctrine of the immanence of God is in everybody's religious consciousness to-day. Men's minds have come once again to refuse to conceive of Him as separate and apart from the world He created. But long before the Christian Fathers believed in it, long before the official idolatries of the pagan world, we can trace it back to its dim but pure beginnings in savage theology. In the Near and Middle East, the Dervishes are its recognised exponents. They received it and handed it on as a heritage from the past, and they teach it and propagate it to-day.

Again, the Dervishes teach the possibility of communion with God through external means, the ecstasy produced by the outside stimulus of the dance. Trace this idea through the ages. In Greece it was most perfectly expressed in the religion of Dionysus, more

spiritually still in that of Orpheus. Here wine was the medium and vehicle. It is the dependence on a stimulus which comes from without, a realisation of the "sacramental mystery of life and of intuition." But wine was not the only method employed in Greece. At Delphi, the mephitic vapours from the sacred spring produced intoxication. In the East, opium and hashish have played a larger part in producing the trance. Dancing has been common all over the world; the wilder and more orgiastic, the more potent. Dancing on the mountains was carried on in honour of the god of ecstasy. In Greece and in the most savage parts of Africa, perhaps with the echo of a magic rain-charm, it is still performed. To the possibility of such spiritual illumination through the influence of natural beauty our own romantic poets have testified. Wordsworth suggests such intoxication through beauty in "Tintern Abbey." The Roman Catholic Church, with its genius for recognising and making use of fundamental tendencies in man, combines to-day the benumbing imagery of incense, of colour, of sensuous music. The tendency of modern mystics is to look for spiritual illumination rather through inward quiet, through retirement into the hidden depths of the soul, than through outward means. Of these, we may find a herald in the Bektashi Dervish, whose *tarîq* (road) lies in his own pure heart.

All through the history of man's mind, the existence of evil has presented an insistent and baffling problem. The unsolved enigma cries out for solution no less loudly because ages have heard the cry. In the modern

West a despair of any answer to the problem has led in latter years to acquiescence in the negative theory for which Hegel, only partly understood, is largely responsible. Evil has no real existence, only a relative. It has no ultimate reality, no eternal significance. To overcome, is to ignore. A change of attitude is required. The monster vanishes when his reality is denied. Many are the religious forms under which this philosophy expresses itself. It appears in Christian Science, which borrowing its expression and its strength from the most emphatic and exaggerated spheres of Western life, nevertheless embodies the ideas of the purest Eastern spirit. Its future and its strength, into whatever it may ultimately develop, lie in this fact. Perhaps it is what the West needs. Should it be proved that in this form something of the Quietist East can penetrate the aggressive West, it may herald a significant future.

But the ideas that Christian Science tries to express are the heritage of infinite ages. We find them all over the primitive East, but in the countries we are considering they appear in the doctrines of a sect as little studied as it is historically obscure. Among the Yezeedis the very mention of evil is forbidden. The story of the boy whom Layard inadvertently called "*Sheytán*" is familiar. Evil must not be admitted at all. Its very mention will produce its worst effects.

Everywhere as we consider these old worn creeds, this quaint ceremonial, we recognise familiar ideas. Among the Shiahs, we have the doctrine of the *Imam*,

with its stammering attempt to express the union of the human and divine. May it be a foretaste of the idea which has found its most adequate modern expression in the doctrine of the Inner Light, which the Quakers and their spiritual descendants have so peculiarly emphasised ?

And all the cures—the cures which were practised on myself, the cures I saw attempted by the peasants—are they not the direct ancestors of all the faith-cures universally revived and freely practised to-day ? That many of these cures do succeed in their object is undisputed. It is primarily, of course, an attitude of mind, the faith of the worshipper, that effects them, here as there. If we turn in the modern Western world from the cures of Lourdes to the cures of Mrs. Eddy, is there much at bottom to separate them from the faith-cures of the primitive East ?

These faiths, these insistent ideas, that recur again and again and startle us by their repetition and reappearance in twentieth-century Europe and America —they have travelled far. We have seen them only as survivals, even in the East. We have not traced the long course of that survival through all the varied creeds and religious systems which have embodied, enshrined, and influenced them. Their history is a long one ; some of their purity is tarnished. But in the long and sifting process the ideas have gained too and grown. New light has been thrown on them, new meaning has attached itself to them, from all the changing human conditions to which they have had to adapt themselves. The oldest ideas are the truest.

Tested, purified, informed with a new spirit, they must be, but at heart they will be the same, primitive, born and nurtured with man's life, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh.

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THE SOUL OF A TURK

I

THE SOUL OF A TURK

I

HASSAN was an Albanian Turk. He had been brought up in a village near the country town of Vodena, and he was always proud of coming from Rumelie (the Turkish name for the European provinces). His father died when he was four years old, and till he was twenty he lived alone with his mother, Asshi. Like most Turks, he was devoted to his mother. Indeed, she must have been a fine woman, and as a grown man he used to compare her to his wife, rather to the latter's disadvantage. Perhaps the most striking feature about Hassan was his courtesy and gentleness to women. His manners were always courtly and reverential, but it was not till I saw him among the rude, unkempt women of Kurdistan and Arabia that I was struck with the quiet dignity of his manner to them. No doubt his mother was responsible for that. I suppose his Albanian origin had something to do with it too.

Hassan and Asshi lived together on a little farm outside the village. It was a bare, untidy, white-washed place with high latticed windows, so familiar to travellers in Eastern Europe. The village, Yeni-keui,

was like all Turkish villages, distinctive amongst their Christian neighbours for dirt and untidiness. The low mud houses showed no windows on the road side, and the filthy, uneven road was the common sewer of the village. The dust in summer was dense, and the mud feet deep in winter. Half-savage pigs with bristling backs wallowed in the mud ; more savage dogs barked and fought. The women were rough and bovine creatures, treated by the men like beasts of burden, veiling themselves only when strangers passed, devoid of any modesty and self-respect. The neighbouring villages were chiefly Bulgarian, with a sprinkling of Greek, and the Turks of Yeni-keui treated them with the contempt of the ruling for the subject race. There were, of course, no dealings with any of the Christian peasants, and even passing travellers would go far before they would halt for shelter in a Turkish village. Far different are the Turkish villages of Asia Minor. There the *oda*, or guest-room, is always clean and hospitable ; the fare simple but abundant, and the men courteous and kind. In European Turkey the simpler primitive virtues belong to the original possessors of the land, the sturdy Bulgarian peasants, and the Turks have never really taken root there nor justified their claim to be lords of the soil. But the farm outside the village had other attractions than the village itself. The house was bare and inhospitable, like all Turkish houses, outside, the whitewash crumbling off its featureless walls and leaving great black patches. High up, the latticed windows of the harem (women's apartments) were broken. But once within

"A RICKETY WOODEN STAIRCASE LED UP TO THE BALCONY"

the great wooden doors of the courtyard there was less filth than is usual in the Turkish farm. The stables and cow-sheds of baked mud were built as usual round the yard, and on one side, above the stables, were the living-rooms. A rickety wooden staircase led up to the balcony that ran along that side of the house, and along it were two or three bare rooms where little Hassan and his mother lived. Their beds—the *yorghans*, or the wadded quilts of the country—were neatly folded up by day on the shelves which were let into the walls. Half of the room was raised to form a sort of large divan or platform, about a foot high. Here, after shoes and wet garments were removed, you ascended for rest and warmth. Brightly coloured carpets from Ushak and Cæsarea were spread up here, and here the *mangal*, or copper brazier of burning charcoal, was placed in winter. In summer straw mats took the place of the carpets. A low table for the coffee-cups stood against the wall, and a clock, which never went, was the sole piece of European furniture in the room.

Hassan was a very silent child. The duties and responsibilities of life weighed upon him early. He had never forgotten his father's dying injunctions: "*Inshallah*, you will grow straight and strong, you will fear Allah and guard your mother well." "*Baba Effendim olur*," ('Father, so it will be') the child had answered with grave reverence. He would sit all the evening over the *mangal* with his mother, both of them smoking together. At ten years old, like other Turkish boys, he smoked as a matter of course. They

meditated, in their simple way. For life had problems even for the villagers of Yeni-keui.

In the daytime he worked with the men on his own little farm, and in his imperious childish way ordered about the handful of labourers who had worked for his father, and who still took their orders from his little son. They always gave him the title of "*Effendi*," which distinguished him from others in the village. Till Hassan was ten he went every day to the *mekteb*, the little village school attached to the mosque. The *hoja* (master) thought a great deal of Hassan. Not that he was very proficient at his lessons, for his calligraphy always left much to be desired, and he never could get further than the second Sura of the Koran; but his conduct was always exemplary.

Till he was ten years old Hassan was the embodiment of all the special virtues of Islam. He was the ideal Mohammedan child, and Islam is not a child's religion like Christianity. There is no manger, no shepherds on the hill-side, no carpenter's shop. He was kind to the younger children; unfalteringly truthful and honest, diligent at his lessons, though very slow; grave and serious-minded always. He was brave when big dogs or big boys frightened him; loyal to his comrades and very generous. His life was frugal and simple. He rose at sunrise, stood to pray, drank his coffee, which he soon learned to imbibe with the prescribed smacking of the lips, and then went to school. At midday he had a meal of eggs, or a bowl of *yaghurt* (sour milk), with water-melon or other fruit, and coffee again. All the afternoon he slept like a

kitten or played. *Yemek* at sunset was his principal meal. Asshi and Hassan sat cross-legged on the ground before a low wooden table, on which were set flat cakes of bread, which were used as plates and then consumed. They helped themselves with their fingers from a dish in the middle of the table. *Pilaf*, boiled rice with scraps of goat or mutton, was their staple fare at *yemek*, but if guests were invited there would be *dolmas* or stuffed vine-leaves, and *kebab*, skewers of rolled mutton held over the fire, and glasses of pink sherbet. After *yemek* Asshi cleared away, and it was only then that Hassan, exercising his right as lord of the house, curled himself up on the divan, smoked his cigarettes in his old-fashioned silent way, and nestled his head against his mother's knee. When he fell asleep Asshi took down the *yorghans* and spread them out upon the ground, and together they passed the night.

Hassan was brought up to be strictly religious, and to attend scrupulously to all the prescribed duties of the faithful. By the time he was fourteen he went to the mosque on Friday, and attended regularly the *namaz*, or weekly prayer. He went through all the recitations of the *rik'at* (prostration) with mechanical accuracy, standing, bowing, prostrating himself, kneeling.

"*Alláhu-akbar!*" ('God is great!') he cries with the rest, following all the prescribed attitudes. "*Subhána 'lláh*" ('We sing the praises of God'). Like soldiers' drill the mechanical exercises are performed, the *imam* in front moving simultaneously to

lead the prayer. Then he must stand with reverent head downcast and listen to the *khutbeh*, or sermon. Of teaching and exhortation there is none here. The *khutbeh* consists of an address to the Deity and a prayer for the triumph of Islam.

But all the time Hassan's mind was far away. The tenets of Islam never appealed to him even as a child. They were too cut-and-dried, too formal, too hard-and-fast. His mind was essentially a religious one, and for this reason he could never be satisfied with what Islam offered him. He was a dreamy, thinking child. He was always thinking and wondering about things, especially about Allah, and *Jennet* (Heaven), that place of *houris*, and feasting and the like. But these things were not pleasure to Hassan. Even as a boy his mind recoiled from the long endless sojourn there. He had no inclination to go there at all, but then *Jihannam* (Hell) was the only alternative. *Jennet* was assured to him. Hassan and his mother observed with precision the five cardinal ordinances of Islam. They repeated the *salát* (prayers) and the *fátiha* ("There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet") each day, they observed the fast of *Ramazan* with scrupulous care, they gave away the prescribed alms to the poor, they regarded the *Haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) as a possible privilege of the future. *Ramazan* was as trying a time to Hassan as it was to everybody else, but its severity was mitigated to him by the accustomed frugality of his fare, and the nights which were usually spent by the faithful in exhausting revels were quietly and soberly passed by him and his mother. Then when *Bairam*

came round, and the relief from the long tension of the feast, Asshi and Hassan used to go into Vodena, she in her dress of amber velvet with pink flowers in her smooth black hair, he in a new silk shirt and a brilliant flowing coat of soft cashmere. They would walk about, she deeply veiled in her white *ferije* (an armless mantle) and *yashmak* (veil), but enjoying no less than he the freedom from the strain of *Ramazan*.

When Hassan was eighteen, he moved some of his possessions into the *selamlik* (the men's part of the house), and in some measure took up his abode there. He would have been obliged to leave the harem earlier had his father or any other men relations been living. As it was, he still frequented his mother's apartments as much as he used to as a child. At about the same age too he had to slay his first lamb for *Bairam* like the older men. The little bleating thing was dragged with a score of others into the market-place, and Hassan with bare arms and serious face drew the shining steel across the tender neck. After that he felt like a man, and when he got back to the farm that night he even assumed quite a lordly air to Asshi, and allowed her to kneel down and wash his feet and light his *narghileh* for him too. And she felt so proud of him, her tall, serious son who had grown up like a straight young sapling through all those quiet years, and who filled her every time she looked at him with joy and thankfulness.

2

About this time a great change came over Hassan's mind. He had often heard tell of the Dervishes, of their strange dancing services in the dim-lit *tekkés* (monasteries of the Dervishes), of the mystic doctrines they taught, and of the contempt with which the *Ulema* (representatives of Moslem orthodoxy) regarded them. Hassan had no very deep veneration for the *mollahs* and *hojas*, and all the official hierarchy of Islam. It was not that he had thought about his religion in any critical way. He accepted it as he accepted the established order in everything. But a long line of Albanian ancestors, originally Christian, had given a mystic turn to Hassan's mind. The cold, precise dogmas of Islam had never touched his soul at all. Though he did not realise it and could not express it in words, he needed something that appealed more to the human, emotional side of him. And the crude orthodoxy, the hair-splitting definitions, of the *Ulema*, were supremely uninteresting to Hassan. They made no appeal to his heart.

And at this time a Bektashi Dervish came preaching round the country-side. Yeni-keui being the centre of a group of villages, he stayed there a month, and got to know many of the men. Every night he sat in the *oda* (guest-room) and talked to a little group of them. The *mangal* was brought in, filled with great bits of charcoal, and round it the villagers

squatted, their sheepskin coats rolled up at the door with the muddy red shoes and the heavy staves. They all sat on the raised part of the room. It was always thus if a stranger came to the village. All the responsible men foregathered, and while they smoked and drank their coffee they listened to what he had to say. It was the only glimpse they got of a wider world, these visits from passing strangers who put up for a day or two in the village.

The Dervish was really a Turk from Central Asia. He came originally from Bokhara, but most of his life had been spent near the great Bektashi shrine of Aramsun near Cæsarea. There among the mountains he had followed the *tariq* (or road) which leads through the eight stages of preparation or *sulúk*, to knowledge of God. There he had learnt the peculiar ritual which imparts the mystic doctrine of the Dervishes. From Aramsun he had gone on pilgrimage to the tomb of the founder of the order, Hajji Bektash, near Angora. There he had been sent out to make converts in European Turkey. The Albanians had always been inclined to listen to the Dervish faith, and the stronghold of the Bektashi propaganda had long been among them. There are said to be more than 80,000 Albanian adherents of the order. The old man—Hajji Mehmet, as they called him—had descended to the plains, and had spread his faith far and wide among the Moslems of the villages; but it was among the Albanians—and the bigger landlords of the plains were mostly Albanians—that his chief success lay. He was dependent for his living

on the alms of the charitable, but he made something for himself by the manufacture of little articles of wood and horn, spoons, ladles, bowls, and the like. This he did in imitation of the learned founder Hajji Bektash.

Hassan, the grave Albanian youth, always a little aloof from the rest of them—on a different level somehow—was specially drawn to the old man. Hassan was still full young to take his place among the fathers of the village, the respected family men who held councils together, under the presidency of their Sheikh, and settled the affairs of the village together. But on account of the respect in which his father and ancestors had been held in the country-side, he occupied a different position from the rest. Though the traditions of his race were bloody and violent, he came of one of the older families in which the ideals of *noblesse oblige*, of courtesy and hospitality predominated. Asshi, who was a Turkish woman, but proud of her Albanian marriage, had taken care to impress these traditions upon Hassan. Unconsciously he cherished them as his life. Whatever his race, Hassan was innately a man of peace. Blood and tumult gave him no pleasure, and to hurt any weak thing was impossible to him. Children and animals he loved, and long before he was grown up the mothers of the neighbourhood had their eye on the tall dark youth, and coveted him for their girls. All unconsciously, and certainly unintentionally, Hassan upheld a high moral standard in the village. It was chiefly his influence that raised the estimation of the village in the country-side. But besides this, Hassan had been

slow in developing, his devotion to his mother absorbed all the emotional side of his nature, and he grew up pure, not because he had been taught a higher ideal than that which Islam generally teaches, but because his mother was good and pure. Besides, among the rough peasant girls who watered the cattle and donkeys at the well, and ground corn between the stones, there were none who in any way attracted him. He regarded himself, indeed, as belonging to a different world. The daughter of some great Albanian chieftain at home in her feudal castle in the mountains, she would have been a fit bride for Hassan. But he had no opportunity of meeting her. Exiled among the degenerate Turks of the lowland villages, he maintained with unconscious haughtiness the finer tradition of his race. So it was not unnatural that when Hajji Mehmet came to spend a month in the village, Hassan took his place among the men, and listened night by night to his teaching.

Hassan's mind was fruitful soil. Religion till now had meant very little to him, nothing that really counted in his life. The punctilious regularity with which he fulfilled his duties in the mosque, and said the five daily prayers; the giving of alms; the observance of *Ramazan;* the punctual offering of his *kurbán* (the lamb of *Bairam*)—the performance of these indicated no sort of religious devotion on Hassan's part. He was a creature of habit, and that was enough to account for it. Besides, he had accepted till now everything on authority, and if he was told that such observances were necessary to salvation,

there was nothing left but to carry them out. Hassan had not been born with a critical mind. These observances had never even faintly touched the deep-laid springs of Hassan's soul, nor roused in him one aspiration after eternal things.

Eternal things existed indeed for Hassan, but they were not connected for him with the ritual observances of the mosque, nor with a conventional heaven and hell. Two things touched him in that way, and made eternal things real. One of these was his great love for Asshi. Even before she died he sometimes wondered at its greatness. She was not beautiful nor clever, and he did not understand what it was that moved him so strongly. Later on he knew it was because she was so full of love and goodness. Nature, too, disturbed his soul, and made him sometimes restless and half afraid. It was not so much the obvious beauties of nature that made him feel like that, the things that everybody admired, the distant snows of Mount Olympus, the bright sea he had seen at Salonika, the sparkling blue stretch of Lake Ochrida. The silence and the breathless glimmer of the night sky would often touch him strangely, and the stars were an unending mystery to him. He liked to lie outside the village on summer nights, his head resting on his arms, and gaze up into the unfathomable evening sky. He would sigh to himself, wistful and perplexed. "*Weh, weh*" (Dear, dear) he would mutter to himself between the tinkle of the sheep bells, and that always meant he was baffled, mystified at heart. But these questionings, these deep soul-

yearnings, what had these to do with the mosque, its flourishing inscriptions, its monotonous nasal chants, the mechanical formula of the *namaz?*

And now the old Dervish from Aramsun came into his life, and dimly, slowly, the truth he had been looking for seemed to dawn on his soul. It seemed to bring all these mysteries into some sort of relation to religion, to the Allah he had learned like a parrot to pray to in the mosque. Dimly he realised that Allah was something far greater, more immeasurable, more vast, than he had ever grasped. At the same time he was much nearer and more real. Somehow he came to see that the evasive inner life which he was conscious of, which baffled him and made him wonder at himself, the strange trouble of soul which the night sky, or the haunting rays dying out of the sunset awoke in him, they were the real things, the things that truly were. He saw a new meaning in his love for his mother, above all in her surpassing love for him. Something there was, he knew, which gave unity, coherence to all, and he might lay hold of the Infinite through these things, and vaguely, but truly, see God.

The old Dervish had taught him that all the things that existed, all natural things, all abstract spiritual things, his love for his mother, for example, the glory he saw in nature, were full of God, in fact were God. God had not made them merely, He was in them. They were God, and love to God and union with Him was the only real thing, the only goal of life. All beautiful things, both physical and spiritual, a beauti-

ful face, the light on a beech tree, the love in a mother's heart, all these speak of God, are His expression, His incarnation.

Here the Bektashi Dervish differed from those of other orders, who taught that only through abstraction, through divesting one's self of all consciousness of external things, could the soul find God and rest in Him. Hajji Mehmet's teaching was the opposite. Communion, not concentration, was the principle of his gospel. Yet each soul will surely find, as Hassan found, that both methods are essential to real communion with God. We must withdraw from the world, yet we must use it sacramentally too. Union with God then, absorption in the Eternal, this was the end of man's life, this was the goal; to lose all consciousness of separate individual existence, " to sink in the ocean of the divine life," this was heaven. It was all very different from the religion of the mosque. Could the Allah he prayed to there, that high colossal being, so unknowable, so remote, whom he feared and half recoiled from, could he have any connection with the God the Dervish spoke of, the God who was everywhere around him, in his own heart, in every wild and natural thing, in all the strivings after good in the world ?

To some of the men of the village the new idea was terrifying. It gave them an uncomfortable feeling that God was always looking at them, prying into their lives. The Allah of the mosque had always been enough for them. Stern, unbending, remote, he yet had human passions which they understood ;

He could be offended and propitiated again, pleased and vexed, angry and generous, like themselves. A hard taskmaster He was, but a tangible one whom they understood and believed in. This God seemed to them to be belittled and degraded by the new doctrine. There seemed no place for Him, if it were true. And yet they were lost without the Allah they knew. They were true Turks, these men, uncompromising, unquestioning sons of Islam. To the most ignorant of them the Dervish's gospel appealed in no way. The spiritual nature of the teaching called up no response in minds so gross. What they saw with their eyes, that existed. Even the conventional Allah, the magnified man, had no reality for them except in so far as they thought of him as one of themselves, set aloof in some golden heaven, imperious, self-seeking, like one of their own Vali Pashas, or even as the *Padishah* (Sultan) himself. To the more thoughtful of them, and of these there were one or two, the new doctrine savoured vaguely of pantheism, of antinomianism, and, backed up by the *mollahs*, they openly and indignantly repudiated it.

To Hassan it was different. His ancestors far, far back had been Christians, and the mystic in him rose to meet and to recognise the mystic's God. He understood what the old Dervish meant when he said that the Allah of the mosque was the same Allah of whom he taught, but the people had imagined him human like themselves. But it took Hassan a long time to realise the identity of the two. At first the *jámi'* (mosque) and the monotonous *namaz*, even the Koran

itself, became irksome and distasteful to him. He still attended the mosque, but only to keep the peace with the *mollahs*.

In all Yeni-keui Hassan was the only man who really appreciated the new teaching. One by one the little company that had gathered round the Dervish fell away, and at last none but Hassan and he met in the quiet *oda* by night. The Dervish was neither surprised nor disappointed. It was generally the Albanians who most readily grasped his teaching. Hassan was very silent over it; he was never a man of words, and the terms the Dervish used were all new to him. He had never been taught to speak about religious matters, but he was a rapt and responsive listener, and his whole soul drank in the new teaching. He was an impressive-looking disciple, of whom any teacher might be proud, with the grave seriousness of his face, the straightness of his back as he sat cross-legged on the floor, the dignity of the square black head bending over the cigarette he was rolling with neat, deft fingers. Now and then he would throw back his head and shrug his shoulders when he was mystified or in doubt. When his mind assented readily, he dropped his head on his breast and nodded repeatedly. With unconscious abandonment he would throw himself back sometimes, and lie with his head on his folded arms, thinking deeply. Then the Dervish, with instinctive tact, ceased to speak, for he knew the light was at work, and silence was best.

Possibly the old man had hopes of a real disciple

here. The followers who were willing to give up all for the light, who, in the seclusion of a monastery, would follow the *tarîq* which all must follow who reach the goal, were few. He had visions of his convert here becoming a *sâlik* (traveller) attached to some *pîr* (teacher), and, under his guidance, passing successfully through the eight stages enjoined by the Dervish doctrine. Many failed half-way. The first stages—service, love, seclusion, knowledge, ecstasy—were often reached, but then hearts grew faint, and the last stages were seldom attained. *Faná*, or extinction in death, is the final goal of the initiated. The old man was an enthusiast for his gospel. He had a real moral earnestness, a delicacy of spiritual appreciation, which, among the now decaying Dervish-orders of Turkey, are rare. He had no desire to wean men from the established order of religion. It was best that until they really grasped the allegorical significance of outward ceremonial, they should get what enlightenment they could out of it. But at the same time it was matter of common knowledge that they who followed the Dervishes became speedily lax in these observances. The doctrine was dangerous food for those who had never advanced beyond the lowest stages of spiritual experience. The abuses to which it led, the excuses it so easily provided for casting aside the restraints and fetters of creeds and ceremonies, and even moral laws, without any insistence on other observances or standards, these have always been the weakness of mystic doctrines when applied to those who are

spiritually undeveloped. Hassan, with his sober mind, his obedience to habit, was not aware of these dangers.

It was only natural then that the *mollah* of Vodena sent out directions to the local *imam* of Yeni-keui that the faithful were to be discouraged from listening to Hajji Mehmet's teaching, and that stricter observances of *namaz* and the coming *Ramazan* were to be enjoined on the village. And the *imam* of Yeni-keui, an ignorant little man of no education, looked with great disfavour on Hassan. He felt indeed that he had lost one of the main props of the Church, the most prominent and highly respected landlord in the district. For though Hassan still attended *namaz*, it was with growing infrequency and disinclination.

The Dervish had left the village and gone off on his preaching tour. He was to come back that way in a few months' time, and then he hoped to find Hassan a willing *sálik* for the "road." Meanwhile, he left with him many directions as to thought and religious meditation. Hassan's emotions had been strangely stirred. His intellect too—slow-moving but sure in penetration—was at work. But above all it was his religious consciousness which was awake. Here, he felt vaguely but with growing conviction, he would find some real satisfaction, some answer to the old question which had tormented him in all his moments of depression since childhood—"*ne-faide?*" (What is the good?), what is the good of anything, of being good, of saying prayers, of giving alms? The rewards or punishments of another world had long ceased

to impress him as either deterrents from wrong-doing, or desirable compensations.

But the scheme that Hassan and the Dervish had planned was not to be. Only a month after the old man left the village Asshi died. She was not old, but Turkish women age young, preserving, as they do, in many ways the habits of a nomadic people. Her life had been hard, but it was its growing ease and freedom from care that really made her suffer. Her heart yearned for the helpless child that had filled her life till now. He was a strong man now—had he not slain the lamb at *Bairam*, and sat among the *babas* (fathers) of the village like a man? Truly he loved her still, but she knew he had no need of her. He must marry and have children of his own. That thought weighed on Asshi's mind. When he was married, what would become of her? She did not speak of it to Hassan, but it kept her awake at nights. She had her usual bout of fever in the summer, and with the first breath of autumn it turned to pneumonia. Hassan fetched a *hoja* (learned man) from Vodena, and he muttered the familiar incantations over her, and decked her out with special charms—blue beads and amulets—to distract the great enemy that lurked near by. She was too tired of life to respond to these means, and when November came she slowly wasted away.

One night before she died the wind blew hard, the rain lashed cold and pitiless against the broken lattice of the harem. Inside, Asshi lay on the divan; the hard cushions placed all round her on one side shut

out the draught. Hassan squatted beside her, holding her cold hands in his warm grasp. Her black hair was elaborately dressed and stuck with bright glass-headed pins and artificial flowers, while the blue bead hung to the velvet cap and dangled over her forehead. For Asshi is dying; decked in her bravest, she will go to meet her fate. The room is full of people, friends, relations, the *imam*, the *hoja* of Vodena, even—one sees with horror—professional mourners of the village. They are talking and chattering, the children huddled together or running about crying, pulling things out of the shelves, sucking bits of *helva* (sweetmeat). Hassan does not seem to mind them. It is *'ádet* (custom), and it never occurs to any one ot alter it. At the very moment when the soul would be alone with God, at birth, at death, the people crowd together, to make, as it were, one last attempt to scare away the Shadow. But Hassan's grief is speechless. He bends over his mother, keeping all others at a distance with a wave of the hand, holding her in his arms, pressing his face against hers. The wind is damp and pitiless to-night. Hassan pulls off the great coat he wears, all lined with black goats' wool, and covers her feet with it. The face under the velvet cap and thick black hair is grey-white. It is thrown back a little, the mouth falling open, the breath coming quick and difficult. Some gasping request is on her lips, and he bends to catch it. "Say me the *fátiha*," and, meaningless as the words have become to Hassan, he repeats them unfalteringly, the "Our Father" of Islam. "There is no God but

God, and Mohammed is His Prophet." Then, as she seems to pause for more, he repeats the longer form. Can it be there is comfort in the cold and lifeless words, so empty, so unsatisfying ?

"I believe in God and His angels, and His books, and His prophets, and the last day and the predestination of good and evil, and the resurrection after death, and I bear witness there is no God but God, and I bear witness that Mohammed is His slave and prophet."

Yes, in the mere familiar sound of the words there is comfort. Her head falls back on Hassan's shoulder, and on her face is spread a deep content.

After Asshi's death the village of Yeni-keui became intolerable to Hassan. He had lived so entirely with his mother, he had so few friends there. It was lonely. The country, too, was politically so unsettled and insecure that, even from the point of view of his farming, there was little to be gained from staying there. So after consultation with some neighbouring *beys* (landlords), who perhaps had cast envious eyes on his land, Hassan sold his little property at great loss to himself, and went down to Salonika, carrying his all in his pocket. Lingering there one evening on the quay, he watched the lights moving about in the harbour, the boats which loomed in the darkness making ready for their journeys, and a desire came over him to go away too.

Without any farewell, without the least regret, Hassan stepped on board a boat bound for Smyrna, and went out alone into the twilight.

3

After many changes Hassan found himself eventually settled at the little up-country town of Eskishehr. Since he settled there the German railway from Haidar-Pasha to Konia has linked the place to civilisation, but it still retains its provincial and thoroughly Turkish character. He found some temporary work for an English firm in Constantinople in bringing down wool on mule-back from the shepherds in the surrounding hills. While engaged in this work he was noticed by one of the managers of the firm, who made his acquaintance on one of his periodical visits to the depôt at Eskishehr. Hassan gave an impression of reliability, and through this acquaintance he was asked on one occasion to act as cavasse to an English "milord," who had come out to hunt wild sheep in the interior of Asia Minor.

Thus was Hassan brought into touch with the English, with whom later on his life was to be so much bound up. The great "milord," a well-known big game hunter, was a revelation to Hassan, whose acquaintance even with the life of Turkish pashas was limited. The high standard of personal comfort achieved in camp life amazed him. What *araba*-loads of bottled ale there were! What farmyards of sheep, geese, turkeys, and chickens were driven behind the camp, ready for the daily slaughter! He observed his master's dragoman too from Stamboul, who pocketed his £1 a day

apparently to fleece his master and bully the villagers. The Greek cook who spoke French interested him too, and the host of servants and retainers from Constantinople, who, housed in their trim white tents from London, seemed to cover the hill-side.

But what struck Hassan most was the character of the Englishman. The great, strong, lean man, with his long lanky legs, his huge nose and mouth, his powerful frame, his rough home-spun coat, appealed irresistibly to the son of the Albanian chieftains. He looked like a man who could slay his enemies, and was equal in strength to two ordinary men. Hassan liked his haughty imperious ways, the inflexible justice he meted out to his servants. In a land where wealth is synonymous with cruelty and oppression, the stainless honesty and justice of the great strong man appealed strangely to Hassan. His hatred of cruelty too amazed him. One day one of the muleteers was kicking a lame mule which could get up no more under its enormous load. The Englishman came out of his tent with his riding-whip, got hold of the man by the neck, and thrashed him in full view of all the camp and of the *mudir* (governor) of the place himself, who had come to pay his call. The muleteer was a Moslem, and it is sheer madness in Turkey for a Christian of whatever race to lay hands on a Turk, but the great man never paused for a second when he had made up his mind to anything. He would consult neither means, nationality, nor religion. He feared no man, sometimes, Hassan thought, not even Allah. Yet he served a god of a sort—that was patent. This

justice, this honesty, this hatred of cruelty, what were these but his god—a god too who demanded an absolute devotion? He swept all other gods before him. Hassan had a vague feeling that if the very Prophet himself had kicked the lame mule the Englishman would have thrashed him. Yet this fearless chastisement of cruelty, this lordly indifference to local prejudices and all possible consequences, even the entanglement of the Turkish law-courts, when helplessness or suffering were at stake, seemed not incompatible, for the Englishman, with a supreme and overmastering desire to take the life of wild animals. To stalk the stags or wild sheep of the mountains with tireless persistency, this seemed to be the main object of the Englishman's life. Yet even here an all-compelling pity for pain in any form continually checked and thwarted him. On one occasion a female *mouflon* was wounded and got away. The Englishman gave himself neither food nor rest till, late at night, himself worn out, he had tracked the beast to its hiding-place and despatched it with a bullet. Pity had driven him forth, relentless, overwhelming, and Pity was his god.

But it was difficult for the peasant Turks to understand this trait in the Englishman's character when they saw it applied to their own women. The camp was moving up a valley one day to pitch at a spring higher up. The camp furniture was piled up in the *arabas*, the men were walking or riding in turns on the donkeys. On the steepest part of the path they passed a woman carrying an enormous load of sticks on her back. Behind her walked a man, unloaded,

who urged on her stumbling steps with oaths. The Englishman was walking himself, the loose limbs under the shabby coat covering the ground with amazing speed. His eyes were on the ground as if he saw nothing, yet all the time no detail escaped him. He had seen the toiling woman with her load. She was only a peasant woman, not young, very wrinkled, smelling of onions and the dirt of years. His face changed as he watched the couple for an instant. The peasant Turk who walked behind the woman was afraid of that look. But the Englishman pushed past him, giving him a thrust with his elbow that sent him staggering among the rocks. Then he strode on to the woman, and since he was so full of rage and anger the man expected he would do the same to her, but the hand he laid on her shoulder was gentle though peremptory. Startled, she paused and dropped her burden. With a strength he seldom displayed he heaved her load on to his own shoulders, and ahead of them all he strode up the mountain-side.

Now Hassan, who pondered deeply, but thought slowly, realised that these things the Englishman did were done in response to some religious impulse. He never saw him pray indeed, nor even go to church, but the force which impelled this anger, this indignation, this intense pity for suffering, he recognised as the force of religion. The conscience the Englishman obeyed was lord of his life, it admitted of no appeal. Many of his virtues were readily appreciated by Moslems, for they were the special virtues the Koran extolled—for instance, unswerving honesty in dealing

with one's fellow-men. Once, through ignorance of the local money value of a *metallik* (a copper coin), the Englishman had given too little change by a halfpenny to a man who had demanded toll at a bridge in Eregli. The man had whined and protested, but they all did that, and the Englishman had swept him aside with his usual imperiousness. That night, after consultation with his guide-book, he discovered the exact value of the coin. The camp was eight miles from Eregli, and the next day, Sunday, was set apart for rest. It was a broiling day, but the Englishman must needs walk into Eregli himself to rectify the fault. The man at the bridge had called him a fool to his face for his pains. The Englishman came back that evening, very late and very hot, and the dragoman was the victim of a furious outburst. But his conscience was appeased. This honesty the Turks appreciated. The evidence of wealth which surrounded the Englishman, the big escort, the comfort of the camp, the Pyrenean hunters, the bullying dragoman, these, in the hands of a Turkish pasha, would have implied, inevitably, cruelty and selfishness. Not so here. Side by side with the evidence of great wealth and power existed this stern moral code, a personal abstemiousness, a high and lofty rectitude. Were all Englishmen like this giant, Hassan wondered? He liked him greatly, chiefly because he never cringed to anybody, no more to the Turk than he did to the Greek or the Armenian.

But though Hassan admired the character of the Englishman, he was conscious of its limitations, the

narrowness of the sphere it operated in. And the religion which inspired it seemed to him hopelessly inadequate, wholly unsatisfying.

4

After this episode in his life Hassan looked about for a wife. Through the service of a duenna he heard of one who sounded suitable. She was older than he, and her beauty was a matter of taste. But she had a little money, she came of a good old merchant family, and her character was unimpeachable. Hassan was married with all the usual Mohammedan ceremonies. The question of love did not enter his mind. No woman could take his mother's place, and love had not to be reckoned with in a Turkish marriage. He regarded his marriage as a purely natural and inevitable stage in life, as much a matter of course for a grown-up man of position as growing grey would be in later years. On his wedding-night, when he entered the house with his friends where the bride was awaiting him among her women, there was a moment of disappointment indeed. He raised the veil that covered her, and saw her for the first time. No, she was not beautiful. She was older-looking than he expected, and her front teeth projected. But, after all, marriage was only a means to an end. Hassan had imbibed many new ideas in the last two years, but the primitive root-beliefs on which Moslem society is founded were held by him still with un-

wavering conviction. To propagate the race, to beget strong sons, this was the primary obligation that rested on every man.

The course of Hassan's life was not greatly changed by his marriage. Halidé prepared him his midday meal at home, but he still took his coffee with his friends. When he was at home in Eskishehr, he divided his time between the *hammám* (bath) and the *charshi* (bazaar). He still managed the carrying of the wool from the hills for the English firm, and at certain seasons he was away from home for weeks at a time. In the Turkmendagh, the mountains where he had to gather the wool, the cold pine-scented air, and the *tazi su* (fresh water), so dear to the heart of a Turk, made him strong and brown again as he had been at Yeni-keui. He was good to look upon.

And then the children came. To be the father of sons had always appeared to Hassan the ultimate goal, the supreme happiness to which a man could attain. He was quite conscious of what he had been to his mother—not her joy only, but the very reason and meaning of her life. It was even more than the common run of sons are to their Eastern mothers, because there was no father to share the pride and the burden. But it was not only what experience promised him in being the father of sons. In all the primitive instincts and ideas which at bottom rule man's life, in all the habits and conventions, too, which could hardly be distinguished from his principles, Hassan was an Oriental. The man who died childless was to him the poor man, not only to be pitied, but

unworthy of respect. He was to be accounted without honour in the land, he would be unfollowed to the grave. Hassan felt all this instinctively and fervently. When his first boy was born, perfect in every part, healthy and vigorous even in his cradle, he was satisfied. Life had a meaning to him it had not had before. There was real praise in his heart when he went to *namaz* next Friday, in all the glory of new fez and silk *'anteri* (coat). He received the congratulations of his friends with dignity. They were his right. Then the second son came, and Hassan's cup was full. Allah was indeed gracious to him. He regarded himself as specially marked out for divine favour, was conscious of his exalted position. His face as he moved about the bazaars literally shone with the light of joy and pride.

All this did not make him think more of spiritual things. The material, the apparent, occupied so very large a place in Hassan's consciousness now. There was not much room for the unseen realities which once had meant so much to him. The world was so full, so rich, so dazzlingly beautiful. Two sons of his own! He had to feel their plump arms and pinch their soft necks to make quite sure of his good fortune.

They were fine sturdy little fellows, his boys, and all the noblest elements in Hassan's nature were nourished by the baby-lives. He called them Hassan and Hussein, after the grandsons of the Prophet. At the age of thirty Hassan felt that life was good. He was satisfied with things as they were. Middle-

age, which comes early to men in the East, had come to Hassan, and on him, as on so many, it had laid a blight. His life was prosperous, rich in all that in the East is counted of worth. It was no soft and easy life he led. It was frugal and hard. But his scanty income was assured, and it is not in the heart of an Oriental to worry about the future. His wife had not beauty, but at least she made him a good housekeeper. She upheld the honour of his name in the harems, and she mothered his children well. The boys were healthy and well-grown, the cause of such pride to their father as the fathers of the West, with less patriarchal ideals, can seldom experience. And so all things went well with Hassan. He had a position in Eskishehr second to none. Every one looked up to him, and the very loftiness of his stature and the undeniable beauty of his appearance inspired a certain respect in the bazaar of an Eastern town. Even the Jew usurer and the cunning Greek merchant of the place kept their hands off Hassan the Albanian.

And with self-satisfaction and ease came, as it always does, a deadness to spiritual things. Half unconsciously Hassan began to drift again; to fall back into the unthinking, only half-conscious spiritual condition of the orthodox majority. He attended the *jámi'* on Friday, sent the boys at four and five to the *mekteb* attached to it, made his harem one of the strictest in the place, and felt, for the only time in his life, the joys of material well-being. The things of the other world played a very small part in his life. He began to be rather proud of observing religious

practices correctly, and obeying punctiliously the external demands of his religion. Pride stepped in, and religion, as usual, ceased to be an active force.

But good may come from such appreciation of the things of the world. It was a lasting benefit to Hassan that he had these days of material prosperity. Without them, perhaps, the experience of the latter days would never have revealed its full meaning to him; the spiritual realities would never have been consciously his own.

5

The time of Hassan's prosperity was short. Dark days were close upon him. Little Hussein was only five when the hot summer and the dust of Eskishehr bred malaria in the town. Children sickened by the score. Hussein lay stiff and dying when Hassan, the other one, who was six, took the fever too. Within a week he lost them both. No special effort was made to save them. "Can man know better than God?" his friends argued with Hassan. "*Kismet*" (It is fate). "*Allah biliyor*" (Allah knows). Stricken and stunned, he bowed his head to the blow. The fundamental principle of Islam, absolute, unquestioning submission, a real belief in Fate, an acceptance of the so-called inevitable, this was the philosophy in which Hassan was soaked. But it had never really become part of himself. His ancestors were no sons of Islam.

Hassan's life was bound up with the little lads.

They had been his pride, his happiness. The sight of them, the round limbs under the white cotton shirts, the soft black heads, the mischievous ways, made his heart swell. Years passed away, but even when he was an old man I saw him grow pale at the touch of a little child.

It was not only the personal loss that he suffered when Allah took his children from him. It was a shame and a humiliation. In his own eyes, in the eyes of his Mohammedan compatriots, his position in the bazaars was lost. He was a humbled, broken man. The birth of a little girl a few months later he took as almost a disgrace. It is the son who makes a man hold his head up in the East.

When he buried his first-born son, the second in one week, the rain was pouring pitilessly down. The puddle at the bottom of the little grave was inches deep already. The child's body, swathed in white cloths, lay drenched on the board they had carried it on. Hassan recoiled from the sight. It was to go down into the puddle, that little white body, into the cold oozing mud and the brown water which the rain was splashing. The driving rain-mists shut out the waste of broken mounds and crumbling Turkish tombstones which stretched over the hill-side. At Hassan's side stood Muharrem, his friend from the hills, the man who had always stood by him in any crisis. He used to say Hassan's hair turned grey that night.

Bitterness was in his heart. All the old questionings rushed back. The doubts, the aching desires that prosperity had stifled had come back with poignancy.

"*Ne-faide? Ne-faide?*" (What is the good?)—that was the cry of his soul. What is the good of anything —of house, and home, and children, and money, and position, and honour, and respect? Before, it had come to him as an intellectual doubt, now it came with horrid personal significance. The sight of the muddy water in that cruel little grave had seared him. The iron had entered into his soul.

Halidé grew into an old, old woman when the boys died. Any pretence of beauty she had ever had faded away. She was ugly now. Her teeth protruded still more, and she grew thin. Hassan hated a thin woman. Her hacking cough got on his nerves, and made him irritable. He had lost his respect for himself, so he naturally lost it for others. Hassan never sank lower, never lost his balance more completely, than he did at this time. He was sour at heart. His faith was gone. Overwhelmed by his sorrow, he groped helpless in the dark, and his misery vented itself in the overbearing of the domestic tyrant. He had never been unkind to Halidé. He had been indifferent to her, but the chivalry of his nature had never allowed him to treat her with disrespect. Now he made her life miserable. He taunted her with neglect of the children, she who had borne them and nursed them. He hinted cruel things—that she might have done better for them, might have been more careful.

The Oriental side of Hassan's character came prominently out in the way he bore his sorrow. In ordinary times of prosperity, when no crisis had upset his equilibrium, the characteristics of his Albanian,

his Western origin were predominant. His attitude to women was an instance. He had always treated women differently from other Turks. It was not only that he was gentle and considerate to their weakness. Many Turks were that. It was that he treated them as individuals, as fellow-beings, with a separate existence of their own. There was respect as well as chivalry in his manner to them. It was not the traditional, deep-ingrained chivalry of the highly civilised West, but it was something that distinguished him very markedly from his fellow-countrymen. This difference was partly due perhaps to the influence of the Dervish who had taught him so many things. No one who realises very vividly the reality of the unseen spiritual world can consciously admit any ultimate distinctions of sex, age, race. Hassan had never thought the matter out, but in an unconscious way it had influenced his mind, and added to the traditions of his Christian and Highland ancestry, it had resulted in an attitude to women very different to that of his nation.

In times of trouble and despair Hassan reverted in character to the East. In him the Oriental traits were the bad and disagreeable ones. They cropped up in abundance. Now Halidé was his instrument, his mere tool. She had failed him. True she had given him the children, nursed them, nourished them. So far she had played her part. But now they had died, it was somehow her fault. He had no use for her. Why was she there with her scared, ugly face? He hated the mere sight of her. He treated her almost

brutally. He was not only cold and indifferent to her, he was morose, sarcastic, cruelly taunting her with neglect. And to the women he passed in the bazaars he was different too. They all knew him under their veils. They used to feel instinctively a sense of protection when he was anywhere near; they used to envy the great man's wife. Now he brushed past them rudely, did not step out of his way in the bazaars to let them pass. If there was common or low talk of them in the *khans* he laughed assentingly, jeering. Before, that sort of talk had sunk to a whisper when Hassan came in. But it was the real Hassan no longer. Women were afraid of him; so were little children.

One blow after another fell. The drought of the summer had killed off thousands of sheep in the hills. There was next to no wool to be carried to the plains. Hassan's work came to an end. He lost the larger part of his income over this, and he made no effort to supplement it.

Halidé led a miserable lonely existence at home, scarcely daring to do her own shopping in the bazaars, for fear of encountering the wrath of the angry wounded man.

And so a miserable year passed by. Hassan had lost his work, his children, his faith in God. Unthinking acquiescence in the orthodox dogmas of Islam, conformity to religious observances, gave him no foothold, no stay now. And the mystic doctrines that he had learned years ago from the old Dervish of Yeni-keui brought him no comfort. They came back to him indeed, but with no hope, no consolation in

them. It was a religion of beauty and goodness the Dervish had taught, of God in all true and holy things, of communion with the good, and gradual absorption into it. But he hated the good now; his heart was bitter and sore; he hated the sight of the children in the bazaar; he hated the solemn peace of the sunset behind the Turkmendagh.

Muharrem made him come up to the hills and tried to distract him. They camped together at the head of a cold stream. The simple fellow called in the *Yuruk* shepherds from around, and gave them a feast, *kebab*, *pilaf*, *yaghurt*, all the homely dishes that make glad the heart of a Turk. There was dancing and music and *kayf chok* (much rejoicing), but Hassan would not join in the feast. He sat apart and moped. Muharrem felt himself separated suddenly from his friend by miles of misunderstanding.

6

After this a mere accident changed the current of Hassan's life. The English merchant who had employed him had always taken a kindly interest in him. Knowing he was at loose ends, without employment, and unhappy, he had borne him in mind for the next special bit of work he could provide up country. The time soon came. Two English ladies, of whom I was one, wished to make a cross-country journey through Anatolia. He wrote and asked Hassan to

accompany them as cavasse for a month or so. An English lady Hassan had never seen before. He felt a tinge of wholesome curiosity. Eskishehr was very distasteful to him. His friend encouraged him to go. Languidly he agreed. A week later, the latent chivalry in the man overcoming the reluctance he felt, he dropped on one knee before an English girl in the *khan* of Eskishehr, and kissing her hand swore to guard her as the apple of his eye.

Travel had a fascination for me. I wanted to see more people, to go through a greater range of common human experiences. I wanted to wander, to move on. I did not travel to see sights, to inform my mind, but for travelling's own sake, slowly, from day to day, on horses, camels, boats, with the minimum of apparatus, the smallest possible caravan, the fewest servants, next to no provisions. Ill-health was my excuse, and I decided on a six months' tour in Asia Minor, with a friend whose liking for silence and solitude equalled my own. Together we arrived by train at Eskishehr, picked up Hassan, who awaited us, and proceeded to Konia. There, at what was then the terminus of the Baghdad Railway, we started on our camping-tour into the interior. By *arabas* (native cart), horseback, and river-raft, we made our way to Baghdad. The journey lasted seven months, and Hassan accompanied us all the way. At first he was only to start us, to see us safely through the district he knew, but his new distaste for Eskishehr, the loss of his work, the longing for any chance that could make him forget, induced him to travel further and further

away. Little by little he gave up any idea of returning.

At first it was a great relief to him to be among people who knew nothing of his past, who in fact could not even speak to him. We regarded him as the figure-head for the caravan, though we managed it ourselves. His presence in the camp was no doubt a protection. In spite of the droop in his shoulders, Hassan had the same fine figure as of old. He gave a sense of security wherever he moved. When the winter storms drove us from our tent to sleep in the bare native houses, Hassan slept across our door. When we dined in state with a Vali Pasha, or a *kaimmakam*, he stood behind our chairs. For many weeks I could only say a few words in Turkish, just enough to make known my wants. Hassan soon learned to understand the mixture of broken words and gestures which constituted my Turkish, and he acted as interpreter to others. The long silent rides through ever-changing country, the new people he saw, were all good for Hassan. The familiar faces at home, Halidé with her frightened eyes, Muharrem with his gentle solicitude, the inquisitive sympathy of the men in the bazaars, he was glad to be away from them all. Nobody out here in the free caravan life knew anything of his past. He could hug his grief to himself. He could groan and sigh, and smoke in silence, and nobody would pity him. That was the comfort. And while he hugged his grief it grew perceptibly less heavy. There was much to distract. The child-faces that haunted him grew dimmer, less persistent.

One night the caravan stopped at a village called Baghtche* at the foot of Mount Amanus. I spent the warm autumn evening among the ruins of an old mosque in a garden of walnut trees. The villagers grouped themselves around the camp, squatting on the ground and whispering together. I fed the children with remnants of stale cake and sweets, which I carried for the purpose. I was playing with a baby of two or three which had strayed from its mother, one of the fine Kurd women of Amanus, and, like its mother, was beautiful. A short white shirt was its only garment, and the round red cap with the blue bead that hung for luck over its forehead. Hassan stood beside me fingering his *tesbih* (rosary) and looking at the child, and the hunger for his little boys clutched at his heart. He longed to turn away, but he was fascinated by the sight and could not. I held up the child to him at last—" See, Hassan, can you hold a baby ? " and put it into his arms. But the touch of its warm limbs made him shudder. With immense self-control he held the child for an instant ; then put it down with sudden deliberation, almost with repugnance, and stalked away. Alone on the mountain-side he wrestled once again with the old despair. The horror was stifling him. In his mind he saw two little white faces, the rain that dropped on them, the mud that smeared their whiteness.

By this time my Turkish came more easily and I was bolder. It was not long before Hassan found himself

* Baghtche has been largely destroyed in the terrible massacre of April, 1909.

telling me about the boys. If I had ever seen them, he could not have spoken. It was my detachment from all the circumstances of his life that made it possible.

I did not at first understand all of what he said. He could ramble on as he liked, cursing the cruelty of God who had tricked him of his own, cursing the desolation of life without them. He told me also of the old life in Yeni-keui, of his mother, of Hajji Mehmet and his teaching. It revived his old interest in the Dervish doctrines. He was surprised at his own eagerness when he discoursed on the superiority of the *Sufi* (mystic) beliefs over the narrow, cramping materialism of orthodox Islam. Then he smiled bitterly to himself—what did it matter to him? *Ne-faide?* What was the good of it, the value of one belief over another? Allah was nothing to him now. Hassan was looking round for any straw to catch hold of, any solid ground under his feet. He wondered if the Englishman's religion—and he had seen it at its best—had any comfort, any hope to offer. He used to talk about this. He could fancy how the great Englishman would behave if trouble came to him. He would not flinch from the blow. He had heard from one of the Pyrenean hunters who knew him well, that troubles had indeed befallen him, that he had lost a son who was specially beloved. But he had not grown bitter. His hair had grown white, but his faith in God had not failed. He was only more merciful, more tender to suffering, more just. With this religion of moral rectitude, this consuming devotion to moral ideas, there survived a

belief in the creed he had been taught as a child. He believed he would see his son again, he believed in a heaven and a hell, in rewards for good and punishments for evil. But Hassan knew it was not this belief that informed and moulded his life; that his true religion consisted in the stress he laid on moral things.

And when Hassan thought of it, he shrank from it. That was not what he wanted; it was too subjective, it depended too much on the man's own strength. And Hassan found he had no strength of his own. He had been nourished as a child on external intellectual doctrines which had no relation to life—the oneness of God, the five duties of man, the obligation of prescribed prayers, the "No God but God." What had that to do with his soul that suffered, with his heart that cried out for his lost babies? What he wanted was a mighty power outside himself, a love to hold him. The mystic Dervish creed had seemed to bring God nearer to his life, but then it had nothing to say to the dark places, to the crooked abnormal things that crumpled man up in their horrid clutch and left him like a leaf, blown hither and thither. The mystics dwelt in a land of light and loveliness which, when trouble came, was all unreal.

7

One day, when I felt more powerless than ever to offer him any comfort, it occurred to me to tell him the story of Jesus. It might distract him, anyhow. The story of another's loneliness, another's loss, might brace him again, might remind him that a man must face life unflinching, simply because he is a man. Hassan had often heard of Hazret Isa (the Lord Jesus) from the Koran, but it had not impressed him specially. Now it seemed to touch him keenly. I told him about the baby at Bethlehem, the child in the carpenter's shop. Anything that idealised a child pleased Hassan, and Christianity is essentially the child's religion, the worship of the child-like. I told him of the strenuous service for men, of the sacrifice at the end. Hassan liked it, and often asked me to tell it him. He loved a story. No detail must be omitted.

Though I told it him quite simply and without any inferences, he knew of course that it meant much to me. I had been nourished on that story, and far as I had travelled from the Churches' interpretation of it, it was part of my life. I could never disentangle the sources of my soul's being from the springs of Bethlehem.

Hassan knew little of Christianity as it is represented by Eastern Christendom. What he knew was gathered chiefly from the sensational frescoes he had seen on the Greek churches. The pictures of horned devils

and evil-looking spirits amused him. He had lingered with no less interest over the writhings of the condemned in hell, the streams of blood from the crucified Saviour, the penalties of torture reserved for special sins. The Allah of the mosque had seemed crude and human to Hassan when Hajji Mehmet had taught him a less material faith, but the Allah of the Churches was worse. He was not even human. He was savage and grotesque. According to the most elementary standards of right and wrong, Hassan thought he fell short. He delighted in blood and vengeance, he grew fat with the flesh of his victims. Not content with punishing sinners, he punished his own son, the innocent and guiltless one. At El-Khuds itself (Jerusalem), the very centre of their faith, the Christians celebrated year by year his death and suffering. He had heard of it all from the Moslem soldiers who guarded the great church of the Holy Sepulchre itself. It struck Hassan as repulsive, these deliberate sufferings inflicted on a holy man. He knew the Christians believed his death had reconciled them somehow to an angry God, but that the innocent should be punished for the guilty, that offended his moral sense. That surely could never be just. It made him hot, when he troubled to think of it, with a sense of injustice.

But perhaps in the West the Christian doctrines were differently, more symbolically interpreted. Hassan had once met a German Protestant in Eskishehr, a merchant who spoke Turkish well. He had asked him if the religion of the Orthodox Church was

his, and he had indignantly denied it. In Europe, he told him, was to be found the reformed, intellectual, spiritual Christianity, of which this Eastern fashion was only the corruption, the degradation. As well seek for the pure spirit of Islam among the extravagances of the Ismailiyeh. Yet once when we were in Tarsus, and he had to escort me to the American Mission Church, where Westernised Armenians held their services, he had sat in the porch of the church waiting and listened to the singing of hymns in Turkish. "There is a fountain filled with blood," he heard droning through the windows, and when he heard it he thought of the frescoes on the Greek churches, and the blood so realistically flowing there. Of course Hassan did not realise why these ideas repelled him. But unconsciously the disciple of Dervish mysticism shrank from such a conception of God. Hassan was nominally still an orthodox Sunni. He had never joined the Bektashis. But no fear of the *Ulema* deterred him from inquiring into the doctrines of Christianity.

Hassan disliked extremely my acknowledgment of the Eastern Christians as co-religionists. He could hardly believe it was the same Christ I reverenced, so diametrically opposite seemed the two conceptions. The Christ I told him of was all gentleness and love, a man with the heart of a child, and the delicate perceptions of a woman—a man, nevertheless, who battled for the truth as he conceived it, and for its sake laid down his life. The Christ of the Eastern Churches, Greek, Armenian, Chaldean—they were all alike—

was a poor and spiritless figure, the victim, not of evil men, but of his father's anger. Bleeding, anguished, dying, a sufferer, so they always showed him—a conqueror never.

And the adherents of this creed, the Christians themselves, they were admittedly more superstitious, more grossly ignorant, more morally degraded than the Moslems. How could I go and worship in their dusty, tumble-down churches, and listen with such reverence to the meaningless mumblings of some barbaric Chaldæan mass ?

Even in matters of religion, he thought I had more in common with him than with them. I could have understood far more of the *namaz* (service) in the mosque than of these Christian liturgies, for he had explained and interpreted much of it to me, and he was sure I should find much there to which my mind could assent. But tradition and sentiment were stronger than reason, and I suppose I put on an air of unconscious superiority when I went to church, an air which pained Hassan. At Urfa, where memories of massacre were fresh, and English and American schools were reared to commemorate the Christian victims, I took a special pride in associating myself with the widows and orphans. Many of the women were whining hypocrites, Hassan thought—they did not ring true—and the orphans were fat, smug children with the cant of Western revivalism on their lips, people whom in any other setting I should have utterly condemned. But here I fired at the merest suggestion that they were not all heroes, and the slain men glorious

martyrs to a man. I was not worthy to worship among them, to do them the meanest service, and I waxed so hot and indignant that Hassan wished himself far away from Urfa and its painful memories.

He hated these stoppages in towns. There were always American missionaries who entertained us in their houses, or French and German-speaking traders who brushed him contemptuously aside, and pushed themselves aggressively forward, wanting to make all the arrangements for the camp and hire the pack-horses to save us trouble. At Baghdad we put up for three weeks at the British Residency, and Hassan had to lodge in the *khan*. He came every day to escort us out in the bazaars, but beyond that we did not need his services. Out on the march, things were different. Once away from towns and officials and *firengi* (Europeans), Hassan was happy. Even when he went soaking to bed in his tent at nights, even when for days there was nothing but bread and *pekmez* (native treacle) to eat, even when marauding Hamidiyeh (Kurdish irregular cavalry) were rife in the district, he was still happy. For then we could ride together all day, and talk or be silent as we pleased. There was a great deal of silence, for on such a pilgrimage silence was natural. But there were hours for talk as well. Sunrise and sunset, and the great heat of the noon in the desert, required the silence. Betweenwhiles, the need of sympathy, the desire for some human response in the lifeless emptiness, conduced to intercourse. Sometimes I repeated long chapters of the Bible to myself, a habit I had fallen into when riding through

Palestine, and Hassan listened to the roll of the mighty words, not understanding, but awed. Then it was his turn. He tried to teach me the *fâtiha* (1st Sura) and other Suras of the Koran, and he repeated old mystic utterances of Hallaji the Persian, a tenth-century martyr of mysticism, which the Dervish had taught him, and which often reminded me of something in the writings of St. John. He puzzled me with strange cryptic formulæ he had heard from the wise men of the Turkmendagh, and explained to me the magical jumble of words from the Koran which he hung round his neck, sewn up in a little leather packet. We talked about these things and what they meant.

Hassan could talk freely, for I never laughed at him, not even at his blue bead. The blue bead meant so much to poor human souls, so much of consolation, of protection in the troubles of life. I understood that. Besides, it was not for me to laugh. Had I not myself trusted to chance openings of the Bible, to a Bible under the pillow at night? Even when reason mocked at me, I found it hard to disentangle from my consciousness the obligation to do these things, the sense of safety in doing them. I knew the feeling so well.

But the end of the journey was drawing near. What was the good of it all? *Ne-faide?* The old question that had worried Hassan since his childhood came up again, clamouring for an answer, persistent, importunate. And for the first time Hassan felt there might be an answer. The question did not come quite with the same restlessness, the same anxiety as of old.

He had talked much less of his trouble lately. He had been much more normal, more natural. "He has forgotten his troubles," thought the men in the caravan. But I knew he had not forgotten; rather that, inch by inch, he was fighting his way along the weary road back to the light; nay, that even now, far away, he had had sight of the goal. He could not have described how, but as we travelled, peace had come. It was in the great spaces of the desert, in the long evenings by the river, that he had first breathed in life, that light had first dawned. The loneliness, the dependence, the littleness of man—all this the desert had forced upon him—the terrible need too of power, of love, outside himself.

Hassan had come to no definite belief. Islam, mysticism, magic, none had gone very deep with him. When the crisis had come they had failed him, one and all. Christianity, as he knew it, held no attractions for him. The Christ I told him of, he indeed might be the great answer, the great solution. Vaguely Hassan had stretched out hands of dim hope, of trembling faith to him. To this Christ Hassan found himself turning more and more, in mind and heart, to the Christ in whom, as in none other, East and West had truly met. But it was nothing more. This mystic Christ, this timeless ideal, what had he to do with orthodox Churches and theological doctrines? Hassan would never be a missionary's convert. The form in which he worshipped this Christ mattered naught to him—as well in the mosque as the church, better than all on the quiet hill-side. Whether he

would ever get further, whether he would some day find that the pale Jesus of the Churches was indeed none other than this Christ to whom his soul yearned and his head bowed in worship, Hassan did not know. In finding a definite faith, in the formulation of a creed of real conviction, the long journey had failed. Hassan would still go to the mosque when he got home, he would still, if the chance occurred, go and listen to the Dervish teaching. He would still watch closely the people he met and knew, and try to understand the faith that guided their lives. In moments of exaltation he would still pray.

But nevertheless a great, a vital change had come to Hassan. He felt himself no longer a wind-swept atom, a random warring thing. He was at home in the world. He had found himself. Henceforth he would fit into his niche in the scheme of things, in the plan he felt existed. He was alone, isolated, tossed about, no more.

Hassan's was a nature that must work out things for itself. Experience was the only foundation for faith to such as he. Beyond this great fundamental belief that he was wanted, that life had a meaning, whatever it might be, that life and its primal facts must be faced and believed in, and reverenced—beyond this, experience had not taken him. To profess one word more than he really felt and knew, however he desired it—that was impossible. Honesty with Hassan was himself.

And although the change was not fully satisfying, it had brought a great peace with it. The very

expression of his face was changed. He did not sigh "*amán, amán!*" (alas, alas!) so often now. He did not groan so much when he sat smoking by himself. He could look back into the past, his mind could rest about the little boys, about the dark days that lay behind, and he was no longer afraid. He could do more. He could look into the future. A great strength had come to him, a great conviction that things were right. In the end, after long waiting perhaps, he would see more light still. Hassan had never really been a fatalist. Perhaps that was because his remote ancestors were Christians, Europeans, not Asiatics. He had always questioned and wondered, and struggled against the fate that other Moslems would have accepted without a murmur. But now he accepted—not indeed as they did. There was no *Kismet* about Hassan's submission. He submitted because he knew there was a reason in things, a purpose. Dimly he could descry a pattern, blurred but inwoven; he must not efface that pattern. He must not put spokes in the wheel; he must put his shoulder to it. He knew too, for he could see far ahead, the time might come when he might even love the wheel, the moving power in whose wise and mighty grip all life revolved. Already he had come to reverence it, to bow his head to it.

8

The end of the journey was drawing near. Already half the great Syrian desert was crossed. To-morrow we should reach Deir-el-Zor, and from there strike along the great waterless track to Palmyra and Damascus. It all lay behind us, the long journey, the bitter cold, the driving snow, the floundering mud —and then the cities we had seen, black-walled cities of Armenia, decaying Arab cities of the Tigris, white, palm-shaded Baghdad, blue-domed Kerbela. Travelling was a different thing now, the long hot marches, the lengthening days of spring, the warm nights in the desert, the Euphrates swollen with melting snow. Difficulties, hardships, dangers were over. In front were only the rosy temples of Palmyra, the luxuriance of Damascus, the civilisation of Egypt. We thought of the people we had met and known, the kind and courteous friends we had made in mud hut and Arab tent and rock-hewn cave, the friends, kind too, but more calculating, in the big cities, Europeans, Anglo-Indians.

"*Bitdi dostoum,*" Hassan sighed at last, "*hepisi bitdi*" (All is over, friend), and he specified all the parts of the journey which had meant so much—*araba* (cart), *châmur* (mud), *átler* (horses), *katirler* (mules), *kelek* (raft), *chül* (desert). There was a long pause, after which he added, "*amma dostoum gelmadik*" (But, friend, we have not arrived). It was the soul-journey

he spoke of. There was no spiritual Damascus for him, no sure resting-place to lodge in, no priestly dragomans to show the way, no clerical stores to provide for spiritual sustenance.

"Tell me this, Effendim," I said, "are you still lonely? Do the little boys feel as far away?" "They are not far away, *dostoum*—they are near."

He began to move restlessly, as he always did when no words would come. Then he went on. "I am not afraid of children any more. That is the difference. I love them—I want them by me, and all little things," he added, smiling, "the little lame donkey we gave sugar to yesterday, the baby camel we saw to-day. My babies have come back to me, so it seems to me, *dostoum*. Must it not be so? Do you not think so too?"

There was a rustle behind the rocks, a patter of bare feet on the wet sand. Hassan looked up. There against the brown river stood a child. Its white shirt flapped against the rock it held to with small hard fingers, its toes were lapped by the water. I knew the child—it belonged to the family of a big date merchant, whose harem had joined the caravan at Ana. I had often played with it, and given it *helva* (a Turkish sweetmeat) on the march, when it tired its weak mother who lay in her *takhteravan* (palanquin). Little Hakki had escaped from her watch, and come clambering down the great black rocks to find the English *khanem* (lady). It knew she would give it a sweet. It chuckled in soft baby tones when it saw she was there. But it would not come near her.

"THE BABY CAMEL WE SAW TO-DAY"

Little Hakki had seen Hassan, and babies were still afraid of the big grave man. It was only the last day or two that he had put his hand on their heads, only once he had lifted Hakki into the *takht*, and the touch of his big hands had made the baby afraid. They were gentle enough, but they gripped his little body too tight, and the eyes that looked at him were alarmingly grave. The baby hesitated. The *helva* was there, but he must brush past the grave man, or climb right over him, to get to it.

I was annoyed at the sight of the Arab baby with its toes half buried in the wet sand, and its chuckling sounds. I knew how full those sounds would be to Hassan of memories, of sleeping ghosts. I waved the baby away impatiently.

But Hassan had come to himself at last. He turned to the child and gave it a long unflinching look. All the suffering of the past, all the victory over himself that had been accomplished, was concentrated in that look. Then he bent forward and took hold of the little flapping shirt.

"*Gel, chojuk*" (Come, child), he said in a voice that was almost natural, that was only a little strained, and he held out his hand. Timidly the baby took a step nearer, and Hassan drew it into his arms. He was very gentle, and it was only when the child, assured by the touch, cuddled up against his heart that he shivered once, a little. Then he hugged it close, tenderly rocking it, touching its hair with his lips.

Little Hakki stayed with Hassan all the evening. He paddled in the tiny ripples of the river, and splashed

the water furiously. He munched biscuits and *helva* with a solemn face of satisfaction, he kissed hands and touched his own forehead in pretty Arab fashion. And Hassan played with him, tickled him to hear him laugh, made him ride upon his knee, and went through all the games which babies delight in all the world over.

II

SOLDIER AND PEASANT

I

TRAVELLING from Adana north-eastwards into Armenia and Kurdistan, we were always accompanied by an escort, sometimes of *zaptiehs* (mounted police), sometimes of regulars. They varied from fifteen to two or three, according to the condition of the country and of the treasury. Our difficulty was to keep the number down. The local colonel was generally wise enough to try and get bread and butter for his impoverished forces when he could, by sending them on escort duty; and the hungry soldier was not loth to profit by the opportunity.

The Turkish soldier has been much abused, and often rightly; but there are sides to the case which are too often forgotten. My journeys were made before the beneficent Revolution of July, 1908, and at that time the soldiers had not, as a rule, been paid for many months; and it is useless to abuse a man who is starving for taking the chickens and eggs of the villagers when he can. The villager would give him of his best, and there was no question of payment.

My experience tells me that the Turkish soldier in nine cases out of ten is not the rapacious ruffian we are apt to think him. Doubtless the recent collection of the hated taxes by *zaptiehs* had increased the awe with which they were regarded; but, except among the Kurds in the north, where I once saw the *zaptiehs* refused hospitality, and a fight ensue, there were almost invariably friendliness on the villagers' part, and good manners on the soldiers'. The master of the house where we and our guard were quartered always took coffee with the *zaptiehs;* and for the evening meal of rice and goat's flesh they generally all fared together—*zaptiehs*, servants, and villagers. The principal sheikh always took the highest place on the divan or Kurdish carpet, and his children were the spoilt darlings of the soldiers. These things, matter-of-course as they seem to us in a country where the people governs, meant much where the only *raison d'être* of government was held to be the extracting of money. Doubtless the Government had no business to allow its soldiers to live on the people; but, granted the then state of things—an unpaid army, an ignorant peasantry who knew the army was unpaid, and the prevailing ideas of government—my experience was that the soldier was less grasping than the peasant was hospitable. I once saw three children dissolve into tears when I approached with an officer at my side. The soldier, a Kurd regular, assured me, while he patted the three little shaking backs, that it was all his fault and not mine. "The Government is so terrible, you know. It is my coat they fear." But,

for my part, I think my riding-habit was quite as terrifying as his ragged uniform.

Our escort generally included one officer of the rank of lieutenant or captain, with a differing number of privates under him. No doubt they were picked men ; but their conduct was certainly exemplary, as far as we were concerned. Many of the officers had passed through the military college at Stamboul, and seen something more of life than the boundaries of their own *vilayet.* They were always intensely religious men, and neither gales nor robbers were allowed to interfere with the five daily prayers. They were our principal companions through the monotonous day's march, and in the long winter's evenings in tent, *khan* or peasant's hut. The captain's past experiences, his fluency in all the languages of the "Franga"—witness his "*Bon jour, Madame,*" sole relic of a glorious past—the mysteries of his harem, the success of his sons, the duties of his religion, the monotony of his life ; all would be produced for my edification. The discomforts of travelling in winter, the chance of getting shelter to-night, and of the lame mule holding out till the next stage—such common interests helped to while away many an hour, and make us forget the bitterness of the wind. It was only at a later stage, when our friendship was established, that the real burdens of Achmet Yuz bashi's soul would out : his hard lot, the six months' arrears of pay due to him, the state of his country, terrorised by the dreaded Hamidiyeh, once even the wickedness of the Padishah himself.

The scourge of Mesopotamia, at the time I speak of, was the Hamidiyeh, the famous Kurd cavalry. The Sultan had tried in vain to reduce the wild rebels of Kurdistan to submission; at length he bethought himself of the ingenious plan which had stood him in good stead in more than one of his provinces. The Kurds were in a majority in Armenia. They had always harried the Armenians, while at the same time they had defied the Porte. A common cause should now unite them. The Armenians should be proclaimed rebellious; and Turk and Kurd, joined in unholy alliance, should suppress them. In this way murder and pillage had received the official sanction; henceforth the Kurdish mob had been organised and led by Turkish officers. It was a desperate measure, its risks were great, but for a time it succeeded. Abdul Hamid, with Zeki Pasha as his accomplice, organised the famous cavalry. The Hamidiyeh were formed, and, when the extermination of Armenians was ordered from Yildiz, the weapon was ready to hand. At the time of the massacres, Turkish officers, commanding the Hamidiyeh and a rabble of Kurdish peasantry, hounded them on to their sickening work.

Now once more, it seemed, the Kurd had proved himself too much for the Turk. The stronger of the pair had kicked over the traces. The rule of Abdul Hamid meant no more law and order for the Moslem than for the Christian. Except for the wealthy Moslems of the towns, with whom for the sake of money the Sultan had to curry favour, and the religious sheikhs, for whom

he was still emphatically the Khalif of God, the Turk of the Eastern provinces was no longer inspired with great personal loyalty to Abdul Hamid. The Kurd had been given too long a tether. He was ruler now in Armenia and Kurdistan, and the Sultan his humble servant. The Turk found himself at that date, almost equally with the Christian, at the mercy of the Hamidiyeh. This side of the Euphrates the Porte still governed. The other side, the Kurds were supreme, dividing the land for purposes of government into two larger districts, each at war with the other.

In the south, Ibrahim Pasha held his court at Viranshehr. From thence he raided the Arabs of his vast district. At Harran, south of Urfa, where we were the guests of the Sheikh of the Beni-zeid, we were able to congratulate our host in person on having appeased for a time the vengeance of Ibrahim Pasha. A year back, some of his men, goaded to desperation by the raids of the Hamidiyeh, had stolen fifty of Ibrahim's mules by night. The tribe had received scant mercy since then; they were impoverished, robbed of their mules, their women, and their stores, and were the victims of incessant attacks. The night we were his guests the wrong was repaired. Loud shouting outside the hut told us of some conquest, and the sheikh entered, excited and beaming, to inform his assembled warriors that the stolen mules, for which the plains had been scoured during twelve months, on that day had been recovered. The robbers would be brought to justice; he himself must make his excuses to us and be gone at once, for he must take the mules

in person to the court at Viranshehr, and deliver them to the offended Pasha. Ibrahim, outlaw and marauder though he might be, was a gentleman. His murders and robberies were committed only on a large scale, and in the light of day. Our friend the sheikh, escorting the stolen mules, need have no fear of secret assassination. We ourselves were always told that we need fear nothing if we fell into the hands of Ibrahim Pasha. After relieving us of our belongings, he would deliver us safe and sound at the door of some neighbouring *konak*, with a polite note explaining his own immediate need of money and mules.

In the north, we had to deal with a different state of things. Till a year before, Mustafa Pasha, who combined the brutality of a savage with the dash of a first-rate cavalry leader, ruled Turk and Christian alike. The barracks of his troops were at Jezireh, a town on the Tigris, midway between Diarbekr and Mossul. But, before we arrived at Diarbekr, the chief had been killed by a plot. Christians, Turks, and Kurds were shaking hands in the streets with tears of joy. The command had devolved upon his three sons, weaker, if not less wicked, than their parent.

Personally, as travelling Europeans, we had not much to fear from these robber bands. We had been cautioned by British consuls and Turks alike that our safety lay in our Frank garb. We must not disguise it too much by wearing native sheep-skins and silk *keffiyehs*, a favourite practice of ours in the very cold weather. Though we carried loaded revolvers, our hats were a much surer protection ; and (in Ibrahim's

"WE WERE THE GUESTS OF THE SHEIKH OF THE BENI-ZEID"

country at least) the Hamidiyeh were under strict orders to refrain from attacking parties of foreigners, and had several times been punished for doing so. On the only occasion when an attack was imminent, it was our evidently European appearance that saved us. We were passing some rapids on the Tigris, the *kelekji* (raftsmen) pulling for all they were worth to steer the raft round a rocky headland, when a sudden turn of the river revealed a crowd of men on either shore—the one a shelving beach, the other an abrupt precipice—in readiness to catch an easy prey. The ancient matchlock guns were aimed straight at the raft; but we had time, as it rushed towards them, to regain our presence of mind, and place ourselves in the safest position. Our soldiers were prompt to point their equally ancient guns and our Turk his massive revolver, while we ourselves, kneeling on the sacks of merchandise with which our raft was loaded, displayed our somewhat dilapidated headgear with as much insolence as we could command. Meanwhile, our officer's voice rang out over the rapids: "There are consuls on board, great English consuls on tour; if one hair of their heads is touched, an English army will demand their blood." And, like dogs with their tails between their legs, the score of men lowered their guns and slunk away behind the rocks.

But for the native, were he Turk or Armenian, Kizil-bash or Chaldee, it was a very different story. Neither life nor property was secure. Doubtless the Christians suffered most, because they were weakest, and the law forbade them to carry arms; but not even the Turkish

officials altogether escaped. A few days before we arrived in Diarbekr, the Vali himself, lord of a province half as big as England, and escorted by a detachment of Turkish regulars, had been attacked one hour's distance from the city, on the road from Severek. Overpowered by a party of Hamidiyeh, superior in numbers and in arms to his own, he was robbed of everything he possessed (horses and servants included), wounded, handcuffed, and flung for dead into a rocky gully. We passed the place a week later ourselves; in the gully, rows of black eagles, perched on rows of black rocks, sat gorged and gloating over the remains of a fallen camel; the snow lay in patches on the black mud. It was a sight to remember with loathing. Some passing peasants had picked up the Vali, and carried him in safety to his *konak*.

Escorts were really of little use at that time, for an unwritten law forbade the Turkish regular to fire at one of the Hamidiyeh, even in self-defence. These required, therefore, neither courage nor skill to seize their victims. Covering the worst bit of road between Urfa and Diarbekr, our escort rode in terror of their lives. No caravan had travelled that road, a six days' march, for over two years; trade was paralysed, and, though we twice over met enormous caravans in *khans* on the way, four and five hundred beasts strong, they were bound for other towns, and had only struck us *en route*. No large bands of Hamidiyeh, however, were scouring that particular bit of country at the time, and those I saw were in solitary ones and twos. One night in a village *oda* (guest-room) an ominous

and uncomfortable silence fell on the assembled crowd; when I lifted my head from the saddlebags on which I was resting, I saw one of the dreaded band standing at the door. They wore no uniform, but a silver star on the forehead proclaimed their order. Fortunately this one was alone, or perhaps he had enough money in his pocket that night. The Hamidiyeh were never drilled, and of course never paid; whole Kurdish tribes were commandeered into the service, and their orders were to live by plunder, and to kill if resistance were offered.

From Jezireh, the head-quarters of Mustafa Pasha, might be seen along the plain a long line of ruined villages, heaps of broken stone huts and roofless stables; one of them was still smoking when we were there. These were the remains of sixteen Chaldæan villages, wiped out within recent years. Of course the Christians went first, but Yezeedis, Kizil-bashes, and all other heretics went too; so would the Turks have gone if they had possessed villages in these parts. Through the worst of the winter weather, when the storms and the snows drove us for our midday's rest into shelter of any kind, we more than once camped among the black heaps of these ruined homes, in a land which cried out to Heaven for vengeance.

2

Have I drawn an ungrateful picture? Throughout Mesopotamia and Southern Armenia, Turk, Armenian, Kurd, and Arab saw us safely through their country, and vied with each other in showing us hospitality.

Travelling, as we did, without the assistance of Messrs. Cook and Son, or of a dragoman, we had exceptional opportunities of seeing the people through whose villages and lands we passed, and we relied more than most travellers do on the kindness of the peasants. The bad weather we experienced also conduced to our seeing much of them, constantly compelling us to vacate our tent for mud hut or wayside *khan*.

During our journey we made use of all the different sorts of accommodation to be had, according to the locality. There was the *khan* to be found at all the regular caravan stages; the *oda* in a large village; the guard-house, where the *zaptiehs* were our hosts, on the lonely borders of a *vilayet* or in the middle of some specially dangerous tract of country; and, lastly, the sheikh's house, i.e., the largest hut of the small village. In the north, the first and the last were the commonest.

We were journeying one day between the Euphrates, where we had crossed it at Bir-edjik, and Urfa. The usual caravan road is a two days' journey, and the night is spent at Tcharmlik, the regular caravanserai. We, preferring shorter stages, had made three days of

it, and the second night brought us to Kareskeui, a miserable hamlet, half a mile off the road. It seemed incredible that so poor a heap of stones could provide shelter for seven beasts and twelve humans; but the short December day was closing in, the rain fell in pitiless gusts, and we were not critical. A *zaptieh* sent ahead to inquire the prospect of shelter, showed us his quest was successful by flourishing his crooked sword round his head. Until one is in the middle of them, one is hardly aware of the existence of these villages. Each house is dug out of the ground. It is entered by a narrow passage through the mud, and all that is seen from the outside is the small heap of stones which forms the roof, and the three larger ones which make the door. The country-side is so littered with stones, and nature has formed such endless ugly heaps of them, that till you are close up among the fierce dogs, and the heaps of manure, you would never guess you were inside a village. The sheikh of Kareskeui stood in the rain, among the stones, to receive us; a noble savage, with his damp, black curls hanging to the shoulders, his sheepskin drawn tightly round him, and his bare, brown legs stained with mud. His sheep-dogs, the terrors of every village, Turk or Kurd, barked and bounded round him. He is not frightened, but he looks a little bewildered. He must offer us hospitality, of course, for, as sheikh, that is his chief duty; and when we get off our horses and thank him in advance, he offers us the humblest salaams, and with a hearty "*Buyurun*," the well-known word of welcome, draws us proudly by the hand into the

darkness of his ancestral halls. The fire has been lit at the first sign of our approach, and, when we descend the narrow passage into the chamber below, the smoke is so dense that for several minutes we cannot open our eyes to investigate our quarters. Feeling for the fire, we creep to it, and at last, by the light of the glowing embers, can survey the scene. These houses are all much alike; the principal room, about twelve feet long by ten feet wide, is entirely hollowed out of the mud. The roof is formed of primitive thatch and stones, the hole in the middle serves as chimney, and the fire is laid in a small depression in the floor. On three sides of the room, narrow strips of Kurdish felt form the villager's divan. Noiselessly, the men of the village have gathered in the room, and are sitting cross-legged round the walls. Each is dressed in a skin, or in the square, sleeveless felt coat of the Kurdish shepherd. These villagers are nearly all shepherds or goatherds, the servants probably of some distant *aga* (over-lord). We meanwhile, more luxurious, resting on heaps of saddlebags and sheepskins, are the objects of silent observation. Not a feature of the score of faces moves, not an eye wanders from the new-comers. At the far end of the room, near the passage, saddles, swords, guns, cooking-pots and pans are heaped, and a man kneeling by the fire is roasting the coffee-beans.

These evenings were rich in very human delights. True, our wants were simple, and our conversation limited in its scope; but the interests we had we shared in common with our hosts, and the hardships

of the route, the battle with the elements, the escape from the Hamidiyeh, the joys of coffee, tobacco, and the roaring fire, were every bit as real to us as to them. They made the long hours in hut and *khan*, with only the Turkish soldier and the Kurd or Circassian shepherd for company, the common bowl for supper, and the mud ground for bed, pass all too quickly. If we gave sympathy for the cruelties of the Hamidiyeh and the wickedness of the Government, they returned it to us in double measure for the bad weather and the dangers of the road.

The surest way to get into these men's confidence is to give them plenty of time. Beyond the greeting, when coffee is served up, and a "*Mashallah!*" when the sheikh's little son is brought in, it is best to recline in silence on the saddlebags, and, while you take them in, let them do the same by you. They are not shy, but they are deeply mystified, and they want to discuss you among themselves before you interfere with incredible explanations. Men we cannot be; our voices deny that. Women we certainly are not. The idea is laughable. Do women travel thus, without their lords, unveiled, unprotected, with their heads in the air? Do men fly at their bidding, as these soldiers do, and even this lordly Turk? "*Olmaz*" (That cannot be). What are we, then? I have heard the question seriously discussed. Something more powerful than a man, something more uncanny than a woman. The soldiers, after four or five days' acquaintance, are wiser. These persons *are* women. They come from a land where the women rule the men,

where even the Padishah is a woman, where the Government thinks much more of its women than of its men. If so much as a hair of their heads were touched, the Government of Inghiterra would wreak such vengeance on the land, that not a man would be left to tell the tale.

Sheikh (acting spokesman for the rest and eyeing us a little suspiciously): "But if they are women, where are their lords?"

Zaptieh: "They have none. In Inghiterra the greatest princesses have no lords."

S.: "Are they two sisters, then?"

Z.: "No, friends. They went to the same school. In Inghiterra all the women go to school."

S.: "Who are their fathers?"

Z.: "Great Pashas."

S.: "Why do they come here?"

Z.: "The *Hekím* (doctor) of Inghiterra has ordered it. He said to the biggest one there—that one that never sits up—'for six months you must live in the air, you must never sleep in a house; the colder, the hungrier you are, the better; then you will come back well.' Therefore will she go out into the storm to sleep to-night in her tent."

S.: "Is the *Hekím* great in Inghiterra?"

Z.: "Greater than the Pashas; no one dares withstand him."

The soldier has given enough information for the present, and he refuses to answer any more questions. It is time for prayers. In the gloom of the hovel the soldiers stand, two or three in a line against the mud

wall, the red glow of the embers falling on the straight figures. Now erect, now kneeling, now prostrate, they carry out the formal repetitions. There is no solemn hush. Smoking, coffee, and conversation go on as usual.

It is *Ramazan*, and the men have tasted no food since sunrise. *Ramazan* falls this year in winter. In summer, the sixteen or eighteen hours' fast tells on the serenest of tempers and constitutions. Now the sun will set about half-past six, and already, a quarter before the hour, the great bowl of *pilaf*, smoking hot, is placed on the hot ashes, the high heap of thin Arabic bread beside it. It is raining so hard, it will be impossible to see the exact minute the sun goes down; but fortunately it is not necessary to-night, for the guests of the evening have watches. Every eye for the last ten minutes has been fastened on the watch in my hand. I have eaten twice since they last broke the fast, but sympathy makes me every bit as desperate as they, and the excitement of the last few minutes is intense. "*Besh dakika—dürt—uch—iki*" (Five minutes—four—three—two). At one minute before the hour, the twenty backs bend forward, and every hand is ready for the onslaught; the suspense becomes unbearable. "*Bitdi*" (It is over), I exclaim, as the hand touches the hour; and for the next ten minutes only the smacking of lips breaks the silence of the evening.

In such-like fashion the evening passes; conversation flows, especially after supper; the innocent cup of coffee is passed round; the fire is carefully

nursed; one or two men roll tobacco into excellent cigarettes and distribute them among the company; some, wearied with the day's work, fall asleep; a soldier asks for a needle and stout thread, and mends his tattered clothes; one or two of the villagers come in and sit plaiting the coarse twine to make their sandals. Sometimes they will sing, or tell stories, which have to be translated by the soldiers from Kurdish into Turkish for our edification. Among the Kurds, music is not developed as among the Arabs. They carry dancing, however, to a far more elaborate pitch, and, on the Tigris, we only felt ourselves really qualified members of society when we had mastered the intricacies of the Kurdish war-dance. As the evening advances they rise one by one, offer their respectful salaams, and noiselessly leave the room. We too must seek the purer, if colder, air of our tent outside.

An evening in a *khan* offers somewhat different and more limited attractions. Stopping one night at Severek, of all dreary Mesopotamian towns the dreariest, we rode to seek the *khan* under the frowning black ruins of a Crusading castle. The rain dripped from the earthen walls, and the mud splashed our faces as we floundered through the streets. In the centre of the town, surrounded by its high and repelling walls, stood the *khan*. The huge wooden doors were thrown open, and the mules trotted in with as much relish as their masters. On three sides of the yard inside are the stables, black, roofed-in chambers, dank, dripping, and horribly odoriferous. Part of

one side had lately been given over to the accommodation of the muleteers and travellers, and, divided by mud walls, had been turned into three dark rooms. Here by night men herd together on the damp floor. This accommodation was all the *khan* at Severek had to offer. We preferred our tent, pitching it at the door of one of these rooms. The mud was so deep between it and the door, that we had to make a bridge of stones and planks to enter the room.

We had just settled ourselves on our camp beds in the tent—they were drier than anything else—when our first visitor arrived. Alone and under cover of night he slipped stealthily into the tent, amid the bustle of champing mules and cooking operations outside. He was the Armenian Protestant pastor. Severek had suffered terribly at the time of the massacres, and persecution and extortion, open and secret, were scarcely less acute now. We had been warned that, travelling as we were under Government protection, the pastor would not dare to show his face; but, fearful and trembling, Aladjadjian Effendi came after all. He was of the most repulsive type of semi-Europeanised Armenians. He sat in his greasy black coat at the end of the camp bed, trying to save his boots from the mud, and squirmed. He asked for money to buy an organ. He believed that England would not be long in rescuing Armenia now. His nation was put here to leaven this land, to be the salt of the whole earth, in fact. She had, indeed, been an example to the world of Job's patience. As I listened, I wondered for the twentieth time that Armenia, with her martyrs and her

heroes (and no nation has numbered more among her sons), can produce such offspring as these—men so devoid, in spite of all they have suffered, of real feeling—conceited, officious, vulgar. The mystery is, that these very men may any day turn martyrs themselves. Many, as seemingly despicable as they, have met horrible torture with severest calm. With all their love of money, their vanity, their inordinate self-importance, they will die rather than desert the faith of their fathers. We contemplate our friend on the bed with a strange mixture of repulsion, of pity, and of admiration.

Our next visitor, a sickly weakling, with shifty green eyes and a hang-dog expression, is leader of a French-Armenian theatrical troupe, which wants to get to Diarbekr in time to perform at the *Bairam* feast. Being Armenians, they dare not cross Karabagtche alone. They have waited weeks in Severek to get the necessary protection ; will we give it them ? Well, it is all in the day's work, and a third-rate Armenian theatre company will certainly add colour, if nothing more, to the black waste we must cross between this and Diarbekr, though they may eat up more than their share of the scant food the villagers have to offer. Yes, they can come ; let them be ready by seven o'clock to-morrow morning.

Next night we all camped together, a motley crew, in the most wretched *khan* of all our experience. The gale roared, and mules brayed in terror. Shepherds and soldiers, rough muleteers, and beautiful ladies in rose satin and green plush dresses, with high-heeled

French shoes, jostled each other in the slime of the yard.

It was a relief to know that only three more stages would bring us to Diarbekr. We could get next to nothing to eat; Severek, indeed, had produced some rice, and a tough chicken; but for several days past we had lived on mouldy bread and native jam. At this time of year the wretched villages offered neither milk nor eggs; our clothes and bedding were soaked through and through. One of our beasts was lame from the rocks, and the men were out of heart; fear and fatigue made the muleteers captious and irritable.

On Christmas Eve, when the snow was falling, and one of the party was down with fever, we were turned out of a *khan*, overflowing with a big camel caravan, and had to seek shelter in a damp mud village four hours short of Diarbekr. Away on every side stretched the hills, the bleak and stricken waste of Karabagtche. Stones were littered everywhere among the rocks, melting snow half hiding their blackness; the wind howled, and the sleet drove fiercely in our faces. Far away over the barren moors, an abrupt cleft in the landscape marked the bed of the Tigris; beyond, the snow-capped mountains of Kurdistan shone in each fitful gleam of light; we had passed nothing but the half-devoured remains of a camel.

On Christmas Day we rode into what seemed a City of Dreadful Night. In Diarbekr every man was armed to the teeth, except the Armenians, who scurried out of sight with scared faces. The Kurd ruled with undisputed sway, and massacre seemed as fitting here

as it was certainly familiar. From the skies above to the stones beneath, everything at Diarbekr is black. Battlemented walls surround the city, a frowning cliff supports it, and beneath it sweep the waters of the Tigris, a swift and troubled stream.

III

ON THE TIGRIS

CHRISTMAS DAY, as I have said, brought us to Diarbekr, a wet and hungry party, somewhat the worse for exposure and reduced rations ; but a week's rest in the comfort of the English consul's house made a start on our voyage possible on New Year's Day.

Our raft had been a week in making, and was not yet ready when we rode down to the Tigris to embark. They were loading it with bags of merchandise, the builder being a merchant, who took the opportunity of our voyage for driving a little trade. The raft was wide and spacious, made of layers of poplar poles, to which were attached inflated pig- and sheep-skins, to the number of two hundred and fifty.

The sacks of merchandise almost covered the front part of the raft, and made a dry floor, on which we established ourselves each morning with our sheep-skin coats. The other half of the raft was occupied by the two huts in which we lived. These huts were made of strips of rough grey felt, adorned with figures and patterns in red, and stretched on a framework of light poles. The floors were neatly boarded over ; and the doors were simply curtains of the felt. One of

these we appropriated as a bedroom, the other served as general sitting-room, kitchen, barrack-room for the *zaptiehs*, and men's sleeping-room. It was heaped high with cooking-pots and pans, guns, swords, pistols, knives, sheepskin coats, mud-bespattered saddlebags, and provisions.

We were about to start, and had waved to the crowd on the shore, when down the hill from the city galloped a horseman at full tilt, waving his arms and beckoning to us to stop. The dismounted rider was helped on board ; and he asked for word of me alone. We retired into the hut for an interview. He was an exile from Constantinople of six years' standing. Suspected of Liberal tendencies, he had been marched off by night, unknown to his family, relieved of his money, and sent to the Eastern provinces. He had not even the nominal office with which many a Turkish exile whiled away the tedious time. Escape was his quest. He could join us at some village a day south of Diarbekr —so far flight might be possible—thence might he serve us as *kelekji* (raftsman), servant, anything ? He only asked for hiding on the raft—he would feed himself, and ask no pay. But we had been warned against exiles ; and I did not detain this one long. It was as much as our security was worth to risk an embroilment with the Government for harbouring political prisoners. He was the third exile who had asked our help. "*Inshallah*," he answered me sadly, when I told him he must hope for a brighter day. Achmet Bey was a fine man, a gentleman, and well-educated. His tall figure in the fez and black military

coat was a very dejected one as we floated away. The crowd on the shore shouted their farewells and their good wishes for our safety, till a sudden turn in the river swept us from their sight.

Few rafts laden with merchandise used to reach Mossul quite sound. They were usually shot at on the way, the raft was often broken up or disabled, and the goods seized. (Our own *kelekji* had made the voyage thirteen times, and had only once escaped with his raft untouched.) We had been instructed what to do when this happened. We were to point our revolvers at the enemy, and put our hats on. The hats were the really effective precaution. What but our hats showed we were *Franga*, and great Pashas ?

The frosts were hard at night, and in the early morning long icicles fringed the banks ; but, for the first ten days, the sun shone, and it was never monotonous. The *kelekji* sang and lamented in poetic strains all day long as he steered the raft, the men chatted cheerily, the water lapped, and the raft creaked. Occasionally a skin burst with a clap, the signal for a noisy altercation among the men, and a stop to blow it out again. Even Hassan condescended to talk sometimes.

Hassan was a true Turk. He spoke little and he laughed less. When he was pleased, he smoked a cigarette and smiled, patting us gently on the shoulder if we sat by him on the ground. "*Söyle bir tuhaf*" (Say something funny), he would remark sometimes, if he wanted an outlet for his feelings of content ; and then the most infantile joke would make him laugh till he shook. But these occasions were rare. When he

was angry, he smoked a cigarette also ; and he looked thunder. It was best to keep out of his way then. When he was sad, he smoked a cigarette again ; but he groaned aloud as he smoked. That was his only way of expressing that he was unhappy. He never murmured in words.

When the sun shone, Hassan was very happy on the raft. "*Ah, rahat,*" (Oh, what peace!) he would say, as he sat cross-legged in the sunshine, leaning against the hut ; "*hich ghalabalik yok.*" (No noise, no crowd.) Swaying himself to and fro, he would imitate the long jogging of the pack-mules in the mud, shake his head with disapproval, and sigh with relief at the change in our fortunes. "Where are we going to, Hassan ?" "*Bilmemki Pasha—deniza kadar ?*" (I don't know, Pasha—as far as the sea ?) That was his hope—to sail and sail for ever till the big sea carried us away, away from the possibilities of tents, and mud, and jogging mules. But mostly Hassan was silent, only touching my arm occasionally if a village was in sight, or a bird we had not seen before.

Every day there were wonderful birds to watch. Round Jezireh and Mossul, in the low marshes and desert places, they swarmed, resplendent in the sun. Geese and wild duck of every sort, great flocks of herons, pink-legged flamingoes standing in the stagnant backwaters, cranes, all snowy-white, or white with crests of rose, and, further south, white and black gulls from the Gulf.

Before we got into the desert, south of Mossul, we passed many villages. At first, as in Mesopotamia,

they were mere heaps of mud or stones, the roofs of underground houses. Then they assumed a more human appearance; and the roofs were of flat mud. Further south still, we came upon regular cave-villages. The villagers were of many different races. It was impossible to distinguish a Kurd from an Armenian village, or a Chaldæan from a Nestorian. There were Yezeedis too, and Jacobites, and Kizil-bashes, and Syrians. There was little to choose between them all for poverty and general wretchedness; but these were less conspicuous in the cave-villages, for there one expected less human characteristics. For some days the higher parts of the cliffs had been marked with the mouths of caves, many of them ancient tombs with carved lintels and an occasional portico of rock in front. It was not till we reached Hassan-Keif, a town standing near the mouth of the Bohtan-Su, one of the largest tributaries of the Tigris on the left bank, that we saw a regular cave-town. Standing at the head of a narrow gorge, Hassan-Keif was once a stronghold of the Yezeedis, and is crowned with two fine castles standing at the top of the cliff on either side. The broken piers of a huge Roman bridge jut out into the river, and, on the shore, are the ruins of an old Christian town, with the remains of churches and mosques littered in confusion together. Behind and above these ruins, on both sides of the river, the cliffs are honeycombed with caves. Most of them have once been used as tombs. Weird and forbidding, their black mouths yawn at the passing rafts, and present anything but a hospitable appearance. As we swept under the

broken bridge, and came to shore by the ruined town, the grey cliffs above were suddenly gay with a moving mass of brilliant colours. The whole population swarmed out of their caves to look at us landing, and moved about on the rock footways and staircases which connect the numerous homes. Patches of green, scarlet, and violet, with great blobs of vivid yellow, betrayed the feast of *Bairam*; for Hassan-Keif, though nominally Chaldæan, will not be outdone in finery by its Moslem neighbours. Three Kurdish ladies of the place, to whom we gave a passage on our raft for a few stages, were the most gorgeously attired and the most deeply veiled of any Eastern women I have seen. The men are even more magnificent at close quarters. In their black goatskin jackets, trimmed with gold braid, their smart blue trousers tight below the knee, and the formidable array of pistols and daggers at the belt, they are imposing in the highest degree. As in all the villages of the Tigris, there is a great mixture of races. Here the prevailing type was Kurdish, though the inhabitants call themselves Christians; the square faces, high cheek-bones, thick black hair cut straight across the forehead, and massive figures, being unmistakable. The men of Hassan-Keif have a name, even in Turkish Arabia, for lawlessness and devilry. Commandeering a minute donkey on the shore, I rode triumphantly up to the caves, along a natural way worn by the bare feet of ages of passers-by.

The *mudir* (governor of a district), a cunning Kurd of the debased city type, entertained us in his cave, the

largest of the town, with coffee and superb water-melons. The rough walls of his cave were damp and bare; but the divan of baked mud round the room was gay with bright carpets, and—object of envy—a piece of glass had been found to fit the hole of a window, except for the matter of two or three insignificant inches.

Two days south of Diarbekr, we entered the splendid gorges of the Kurdistan Mountains. Straight cliffs, with bold flat surfaces, rise in places sheer from the water's edge; and the river, turbid and shadowy below, thunders over a chaos of sunken rocks and boulders. The face of the rock was wet with melting frost and trickling streams, and stained with mosses, green, yellow, and apricot-pink. In the narrow clefts of the rock, giant maiden-hair ferns jutted out. The cliff, running to 800 or 1000 feet above us, was crowned with turreted rocks, bold and black. The *kelekji* had often hard work to steer the rickety craft through the swirling, thundering flood; for the curves of the river were abrupt, and huge boulders lay sunk, only just invisible, below the water. Intense was the excitement on board when a deep booming in front announced our approach to a rapid. Planted between two sacks, close to the edge of the raft in front, and covered with a waterproof, I had the best view of any. Hassan took up a position behind me, and held my belt when the raft ducked under the waves. The *zaptiehs* both helped the *kelekji* at the oar; and, with shouts and yells and loud cries upon Allah, and curses upon the evil spirits of the gorge, we reeled onwards towards the whirlpool ahead.

Creaking, heaving, groaning, the clumsy raft staggers blindly through the froth and foam, turning and twisting in its stupid career, to a chorus of shouts, of roaring waters, and of snapping skins beneath. The raft bends like a willow before the rush of the waters that would suck it down ; and we in front dip deep under the billows that rise to meet us. Once passed, the rapid furnishes food for conversation for the rest of the day.

" Bring a towel—the Pasha must be dried," orders Hassan, unperturbed. " *Baksheesh, Pasha,*" cry the *kelekjis ;* " Hell was open to seize you ; we have saved you by our skill."

Baksheesh is given, coffee brewed, cigarettes passed round.

" To-night there shall be a feast," says the timid Armenian. " *Ghalabalik chok* " (Plenty of noise).

The only town of importance between Diarbekr and Mossul is Jezireh, seat of a *kaimmakam* (governor). In flood-time, Jezireh is an island, for the surrounding moat is full ; and, when we were there, it lay in a watery marsh, wet, dreary, and pitiable beyond description. The place was the head-quarters of Mustafa Pasha, one of the most famous and lawless Hamidiyeh chiefs ; and it suffered much at his hands. The bazaar he burnt had only lately been rebuilt. The Hamidiyeh barracks overlooked the landing-place ; and the timid Turkish *kaimmakam,* who came down to receive us, was painfully conscious of the contemptuous eyes that watched him. He was carried on board the raft over a sea of mud and water, and arrived very

much embarrassed, with his frock-coat bespattered and his boots considerably the worse. He was grateful enough to be taken inside the hut, deposited on a heap of coats, served with tea, and well brushed down. Afterwards, mounted on the gaily caparisoned steeds he had brought for us, we made a state entry into the filthy town. We inspected the new bazaars, the extensive remains of old ruins, and an ancient Chaldæan church. Here mass, of the most barbaric description, was being celebrated. In a church of painful tawdriness, a priest was censing the Sacred Book, swaying himself to and fro with the ecstatic motions of a Dervish, and followed by minute acolytes in scarlet, who paid no attention to our entry, and continued the shrill nasal chant through all interruptions. There are very few Christians left in Jezireh. The ruins of sixteen Christian villages lie in the plain behind, within sight of the town, blotted out by the hand of Mustafa. Yet the Government here betrayed a special anxiety to impress us with the satisfactory relations now maintained with the Christians. A French Dominican priest from Paris was produced for our inspection; and he delighted to show us, when left to ourselves, his tiny chapel, and his Christmas cradle with the doll-baby in pink satin, which had so cheered his solitary festival. Only a handful of fever-stricken children had shared its glories with him.

We tied up at Jezireh for the night; and robbers, common or garden ones, tried to raid the raft under cover of darkness. But Ali Chawush (the *zaptieh*) was quite equal to the occasion, and soon sent them about

their business. All through the moonlit evening, while we sat outside on the raft, the dark men with the silver stars, in the barracks, watched us quietly from the shore. Most of our evenings were spent close to a village. We would tie up at sunset, and, while the *zaptiehs* and Y. were lighting the fire or taking exercise, Hassan and I, with a *zaptieh* to talk Kurdish, would stroll up into the village to buy our supper.

North of Mossul everybody can talk Kurdish, whatever his race; just as below Mossul everybody talks Arabic. In the middle of the village, on the mud platform erected against the sheikh's house, we sit in conclave with the heads of the village—ancient fathers in sheepskins, each with a crooked sword or a murderous dagger at his belt. One by one the young men and girls come up with their wares—coarse black bread full of husks, *yaghurt* (sour milk), strong white cheese, a handful of eggs, a live chicken. I hold up some fingers to show the number of piastres I will give for each; and then begins the haggle. While it proceeds, I converse with the sheikh; for it is a slow process. "Are you a man or a woman?" he asks, rather shyly. "Where do you come from? Are you great Pashas?" ("Fabulously rich," answers Hassan, to get me out of the difficulty.) "Are you married?" General amazement at the negative reply. "Is your father a friend of our Padishah? I have heard tell your Padishah in Inghiterra is a woman—is that why women like you are free to come and go as you please?" Long dissertations on the English Constitution are heard

with great interest. " Have you seen the bazaar that Mustafa Pasha burnt at Jezireh ? *Mashallah !* he was a great man."

The strong men are the heroes in this country. The more they slay, the more they are respected, even by those who have suffered in person. " How have you escaped the Hamidiyeh on the road ? Is Ibrahim Pasha not about ? " Stories are told of the latest incidents in the long tale of Hamidiyeh plunder. " Why, the son of a great English lord in Mossul was stripped on the road from Mardin quite lately, and picked up for dead by a caravan." The " great English lord in Mossul " turned out to be the British consular agent there, himself a Chaldæan, speaking French. His " son " was his nephew. Otherwise the story was correct, as we found out at Mossul.

The bargain concluded, we go back to the raft, and deposit our provisions with the cook. Supper in the hut is soon over ; and we emerge for the evening's entertainment.

Round the great fire on the shore the whole village is gathered, men, boys, and children squatting on the ground in a circle, and huddled in their sheepskins ; for the air is chill. We join the circle too, a quiet and sober one. There is always a hush before the dance. At length the sheikh rises, signs to the *zaptieh* to join him, and together, hand in hand, they begin to foot a stately, simple dance, advancing to the fire and retiring again beyond the circle. One by one the rest of the company arise and join him, Hassan and we, too, taking our part. Two long lines are formed ;

and the dance becomes more rapid. The sheikh begins to shout at stated moments; and then they all join in a conventional chant marked by loud war-cries and shouts of "*Mashallah!*" at intervals. Excitement is gradually worked up, the leaders flourish their crooked swords, the step changes to a more complicated reel, the lines lurch forward, groaning and hissing at the end of each short figure. Finally it becomes a wild career, frantic and fast, war-cries and yells of battle rend the air, the children drop out. It is a scene of the wildest frenzy. The dark figures in the long white shirts, their knives glinting, some with a sheepskin still clinging to their arms, the sword brandished in the air, their black hair tossing on their shoulders, the yells and the shouts, and the leaps in the strong firelight—a scene never to be forgotten. At the pitch of the excitement, I feel Hassan's hand on my arm. He has dropped out of his place, and he bids me sit down. "*Yetir, yetir,* Pasha" (Enough, enough), I hear his voice behind me; and in a moment a dozen men are raking up the fire and heaping up a comfortable litter of sheepskins to rest upon. One puts his own cloak round my shoulders, and we all squat down together. Then, soon, the silence comes back. These men are never noisy for long together.

A sort of sadness falls upon them, and they begin to smoke. I lie on my back and watch the stars, brilliant even for these regions. The men do the same, and there is peace.

"Pasha," one volunteers at last, half shyly, "what do your wise men in Inghiterra say of the stars?"

I do not wish to display my ignorance, and I ask the same question of them.

They are loth to answer at first; but I press them.

"They say," answers the sheikh seriously at last, "they say that each man has his own star. It first appears when he is born, and, when it goes out, he dies."

"Can a man see by his star if he is going to die?" I ask.

"Yes, it grows paler and paler. At last none sees it but he; and then he knows he will die very soon." "Can you point out your star to me, sheikh?" "No, no," he answers nervously, "*'ayb-dir*" (it is forbidden). One very old man near me looks up at the sky for an instant. Then he draws his cloak tighter round him, and shivers a little. He thinks his star is growing pale.

When we knew it was impossible to reach a village for the night, we floated until daylight had quite faded, and then tied up in the darkest and most secluded spot we could find. Before we left the mountains it would be in some narrow gorge, where darkness fell early, and the river thundered, troubled.

The night before we reached Jezireh, we tied up in such a gorge. It was a desolate and gloomy place, dark and shadow-haunted. A narrow strip of rocks and stones edged the cliff that rose to 1000 feet. On the other side the rocks were more abrupt. Rough pampas-grass grew in the clefts of the cliffs. Deep and groaning, the river swirled between them, a dark resistless flood. The wind had dropped; and a lurid

light from the sunset still stained the water outside the gorge. Within, it was black as ink. The raft creaked and shivered as the water knocked it against the beach. Not a branch stirred. Far away in the wind-worn trees an owl hooted. Alone in such a place, the strongest-nerved might wish for a companion. The *zaptiehs* had lit the fire on the bank. It was too cold to avoid the risk of attracting attention by the light; but the men were depressed and very silent, even round its cheerful flames. Attacked in such a place, there would be little chance of defence; yet one and all refused to admit his fears to the others. The Armenian, who bent over the fire, boiling some rice and a bit of meat, laughed to himself when a savoury smell arose from the pot. Then he was afraid of his own voice, and shuddered as he glanced nervously at the black heights above. Hassan and I had found a sheltered spot for ourselves under some rock, within sight of the fire and close to the river's edge. Hassan was wonderfully silent, even for so silent a person. He felt his responsibilities heavy to-night; his two charges all alone in his keeping, and he so far from help in any difficulty. The timid *zaptiehs* would probably turn tail at the critical moment; and, in the Turk's estimation, the Armenian counted for nothing. Hassan shook his head, as if to get rid of his melancholy thoughts. Then he lit a cigarette; and there was silence. "Pasha Effendi," he said at last, in troubled accents, "*jánem sigiler*" (My spirit is troubled). I patted his hand to cheer him. "Courage, Hassan," I said, "to-morrow we shall reach Jezireh; and we will have plenty of

kayf (rejoicing) there." "*Inshallah, Effendim,*" he replied, trying to be more cheerful. "Pasha," he asked anxiously, after a pause, "where is the blue bead I gave you? You are safe if you wear it always." "See, it is fastened to my coat," I answered, and pointed to it. "And the *dua* (prayer) I wrote for you—is it next your heart?" "On my heart, Hassan." I showed it to him, a tiny roll of paper closely inscribed by himself, a string of mystical words possessing a magic virtue. "And yours, where is it?" I ask. He fumbles at his shirt, and draws out a string to which, stitched into a small leather packet, is attached his own *dua*. Hassan is a little ashamed of his blue bead and his magic prayer, all the same. He never refers to them by daylight. Allah is support enough when the sun shines; but, under cover of dark, and in the great solitudes of the river and the desert, he needs something even more potent. But, now that he has satisfied himself that these things are at hand, he can afford to be brave. He laughs a little scornfully. "These things are no good at all," he says with a little swagger. "It is only Allah who can defend us." "Very well, let's throw them away, then, Hassan," and I make as if to fling my *dua* into the river. "*Yapma, yapma böyle!*" (Don't do that!), he cries in an agony, seizing my hands with terrified expression. I submit; and Hassan smiles in an embarrassed way. He knows he has betrayed himself. "Only don't tell Ali, Pasha," he begs nervously, "he laughs at these things."

The last touch of red has faded from the water; and a sad wail of wind comes to us from higher up the

gorge. It is getting damp ; and Hassan bids us go to bed. When we are ready, he comes into the hut and gives us his evening blessing. "*Rahat*" (Peace), he whispers, holding his hands over us as if to bless. "*Akhsham khair ohsun.*" (Good evening to you.) Then he lies down to rest at the door ; and I hear him light his cigarette. He will not sleep to-night.

IV

THE LIFE OF THE KONAK

In Eastern Turkey you should arrange at the end of each week or so to break the monotony of the road by arriving at a large town, the seat of some sort of Government office. On the long journey north into Armenia we struck one of such towns every five or six days, Adana, Urfa, Aintab, Diarbekr, and so on. The days would pass all too quickly for us in a state visit to the *konak*, in a return call from His Excellency the Vali Pasha, with perhaps a more informal visit for dinner thrown in, in a morning given to Mission Schools or the Orphans' and Widows' Institutions, in an afternoon reception from the chief notables of the town in our tent, or in the missionaries' or consul's house, with the Turkish accompaniment of coffee and cigarettes, in interviews with the Councils of various Churches, Armenian Evangelical, Armenian Gregorian, Syrian or Jacobite, in the paying of calls on the *Vartebed* or civil head of the Gregorian Church, and the Archbishop, the religious head of the same,—and so on endlessly.

There were other more informal, but no less pressing occupations. Those who travel with a dragoman are

spared them. There were endless discussions with Government officials, merchants or missionaries, over the safety of the respective roads, and the prospects of food, shelter, and water for our beasts in rough weather; there were the summoning of the official scribe, and the composition of lengthy Turkish telegrams to acquaint the next official and the next consul on the road of our coming, and, more important still, to send formal thanks to the last Governor who had entertained us; there was the interviewing of successive parties of muleteers, and the hours of bargaining over the price per head per mule which would take us on to the next town; there were the tedious ceremony of drawing up the contract with the head muleteer when he was finally engaged, the drawing of maps, the selling probably of one horse and the buying of another, the heated argument over a mule's sore back, the haggle in the bazaar over an extra sheepskin against the coming snows, the bargaining over *okes* of rice and dates and onions, the dismissal of the last escort and the presentation to them of a letter of commendation to show to their chief, the ceremonious application for another escort, the long wait for passports to be *viséd* and *Buyuruldus* (letters of introduction) to be written. The date of departure often came and went with no final contract signed and no start made. But of these delays in Eastern journeys most travellers have written. They are native to the East, and though they annoy, sixpenny telegrams and express trains in that atmosphere would annoy much more.

To greet us on arrival the Vali would send the

Muavin, or Vice-Governor, to present us with His Excellency's visiting-cards, and to inquire after the health both of ourselves and of our father. The message of the Vali of Adana took the form of an inquiry for the "health of the Royal Princesses and their father, His Majesty the King of Switzerland." The problem of our Helvetian origin was never solved; but we there discovered that a report, asserting our close connection with the Royal Family of England, was being freely circulated in the Empire. A visiting-card bearing my name and address—"Miss Victoria Buxton, 2 Prince's Gate, London"—was responsible for the myth. Was not "Victoria" the name of the Royal House of England? Was not "Princess" a sufficiently obvious title? And what was "Gate" but a further title—Royal Highness, in short? Henceforth to the official world of Turkey I was "Princess Victoria." As such I was introduced by Vali to Vali, and we were received with royal honours at town after town.

On arrival at Urfa, in Mesopotamia, we found the town *en fête*. A mile outside the city we were met by a detachment of cavalry. The Governor's French carriage bore us in triumph along the only bit of made road that Mesopotamia boasts. The streets of the town were lined with soldiers, presenting arms as we passed. Flags waved from the principal houses. In the great square of the *konak*, the carriage draws up at an imposing entrance, and the *Belediyeh Effendi* (head of the municipality) receives us with portentous ceremony. We are painfully conscious of stained

riding-habits, and our guarding Turk of his unshaved chin. Next we are passed on to the presence-chamber itself, and His Excellency the Vali assures us that State apartments have been set aside for us in the *konak*, the *yorghans* (bed-quilts) are rich in embroidery, the dinner is already prepared, a guard is in readiness to escort us where we will, the carriage and outriders are at our service. No remonstrance availed. "Such modesty in royal princesses was very becoming, and doubtless travelling incog. was an advantage; but the Government could not be expected to recognise that—it was entirely out of the question." To our own men, and to the villagers among whom we stayed, more ignorant of subtle distinctions, I was "Victoria Pasha" simply, neither more nor less, and at the gates of Baghdad the police who demurred somewhat to the brevity of the title were contemptuously waved aside by our Turk with "Victoria Pasha *olur, bashka yok*" (Victoria Pasha it will be, and nothing more).

To return to the Muavin. The office was created after the massacres. It was one of the so-called reforms, and had been punctiliously put into practice. The law obliged each Vali of a province to appoint as his Vice-Governor a Christian. Europe, with her usual credulity, believed that by this means the Christians of the place would be kept in closer touch with the Government, would get their wants aired, and justice done. In reality this official was the subtlest weapon which Abdul Hamid wielded. He had always been clever enough to make use of the dissensions and mutual hatreds of his Christian subjects. Here, then, was a great opportunity.

The Powers demanded the appointment of Christian Muavins; they should have them. This was a town of Gregorians, and here behold the Christian Vice-Governor, a Catholic. Here was a Greek community, and here the Muavin was an Armenian; here again was a city of Protestants, and here the Muavin was a Gregorian. The title he had earned for himself in the country—"*Evet Effendim*" (Yes, my lord)—was typical of his attitude to his chief — cringing, obsequious, and always compliant. The Muavin of Adana, the one with whom we came most in contact, inspired, however, more pity than repulsion. Though a Catholic in a town of Gregorians, his race sympathies were not altogether extinguished, and before ushering us into the presence of the Vali, he spoke a word for an oppressed fellow-Armenian.

It was a story of one of the most recent pieces of injustice perpetrated in the town. A well-known Armenian of the place, famous no less for his generosity than for his wealth, a medical man, had been the unfortunate possessor of a magnificent Arab horse. The Vali Pasha had set his eye on that horse and meant to have it for himself. This, of course, he thought was an easy matter. No dog of an Armenian would dream of refusing what the Vali claimed. But in this case the Vali was mistaken. Repeated attempts on his part met only with spirited refusals on the part of the Armenian. Nothing was left to the Turk but to find some trumpery excuse for getting rid of the obnoxious rebel. The doctor happened at the time to be building himself a new house in the city. Here then was the

opportunity. A bribed municipality proclaims the house illegally built. Fully one inch of its walls encroach on the public street; the house must be pulled down; if not, its owner must go. Here was no craven Armenian of the kind that exists in the Englishman's imagination, the kind who lifts no hand against the oppressor, and makes no effort to save himself. He deliberately refused to be robbed by the Vali, and for this refusal he was exiled from the *vilayet*. We met him, an exile, in Konia, and he showed us much hospitality. If an opportunity should occur, would we speak kindly of the exile to the Vali? If we were fortunate enough to please him, we might do what everyone else in Adana had failed in doing. Later on, in His Excellency's august presence, when conversation turns to our journey, the opportunity occurs. "At Konia we had fared badly at first, we could speak but scant Turkish then, and could not have made ourselves understood had it not been for a kind Armenian doctor there, who had interpreted for us in our dealings with the Government." The Vali makes no reply, and there is an uncomfortable silence. I return to the charge. "It would be lucky for us if we always met such kind Armenians in the cities." The Vali snorts, and walks to the window; the Muavin coughs; I will not be beaten. "By the by, the Armenian at Konia knew Adana. He told us the Adana *konak* was a much finer building than the Konia one." The Vali turns from the window—that has conquered him. "Pasha Effendi," he begins, in a voice that trembles with excitement and struggling pride, "that Armenian is known to

me ; he offended against my will, and I have punished him." Then follows the story of the house—not of the horse. "But you have come from a far country, you are of royal blood, and you have pleaded for him. You have spoken well of him. It is the property of us princes to forgive, and I will grant him pardon this day. He is forgiven. He shall be recalled from his exile." So in this manner is justice meted out to the doctor. But there were other doctors and other *effendis* in the land in sadder plight than he, for whom no travelling princesses interceded.

The *konak* is a large and tumble-down building, fronted by endless rows of windows, most of them with broken panes, and dense with the cobwebs and dust of ages. The whitewash that adorns it is rubbed in great black patches. We are received in state, the staircase and corridor within are lined with soldiers who present arms as we enter. The *Binbashi* (colonel) of the local force receives us, and we are ushered through the corridor of the basement, up the staircase, and through still more corridors, to the presence-chamber itself. These Government offices are always crowded with people. Dirty, ragged soldiers lounge round the entrance. Inside, men race hither and thither in an aimless manner. Everything is covered with grease, and fleas make merry in the passage. Government clerks in greasy black coats and fezes, guiltless of collars or cuffs, carrying sheaves of loose papers under their arms ; shrewd dragomans from the foreign consulates ; the gorgeous cavasse of some consul ; a Moslem merchant intent on some interview with an

official; the pale Greek from the Ottoman Bank who wants a *tezkereh* to take him to Beyrout, and has wanted it for the last month; the black-eyed Armenian usurer, who wants his money from a Government clerk and will never get it; the tax-collector, bully and ruffian every inch of him, just in with the spoils from his district; a Kurdish shepherd wrapped in a sheepskin, asleep on the floor, and content to sleep and smoke and stare for another six months or so, so long as in the end he gets his demands—was he not robbed by Hassan Aga, sheikh of a neighbouring village, of ten sheep and twenty cattle two years ago on a winter night?—the nondescripts who hang about with ferret eyes and black coats, Government spies with some pretended work on hand; some new recruits for the army, raw boys from far Kurdistan, handcuffed like prisoners and crying for their mothers, left like tethered sheep till somebody drafts them off somewhere—these are a few of them. There is such hurry on the part of the clerks and the officials, such patience on the part of those who wait, such a noise, such confusion, such distraction, and so little to show for it. For nobody does get what he wants, unless it be the most religious of the Moslems, the very richest of the Armenians, and the most persistent of the fleas.

The feature of Abdul Hamid's reign was centralisation. Every department of the Government in every *vilayet* of the Empire was under the personal supervision of the royal tyrant at Yildiz. No more could a poor merchant start the selling of carpets in the bazaar than could a scientist of Europe commence excava-

tions at Babylon, without the *iradé* signed by the Padishah.

We are more fortunate; the heavy curtain that serves as door to all the rooms in the corridor is pushed aside from one of them, and we are in the presence of His Excellency, the Vali Pasha himself. The room is quite small, furnished in the simple Turkish style, a low divan covered with bright-coloured rugs round three sides of it, open cupboards let into the walls to hold pipes and ash-trays, the copper *mangal* or wide-necked brazier of hot charcoal standing in the middle. The only signs of Western influence in the room are the great wooden writing-table full of drawers and littered with papers, and the black frock-coat of His Excellency who sits at it. That writing-table is very imposing, but it is scarcely ever used. The Vali sits on a chair pushed well back from it, one leg crossed over the other as only a Turk knows how, and does all his writing in his hand as the scribe does at the street corner. He holds the paper close up to his left eye, and writes on one finger for table.

The Vali is a big, heavy man of Kurdish type—protruding brows, thick nose, slightly dilated eyes. In Asia Minor proper there were Albanian Governors, especially in the Konia *vilayet*. Further east, if he was not a Kurd, he was a "Stamboulee." Raised to his post by favour, he maintained it by corruption. He had only one motto in life—"*à la Franga*"; and "*à la Franga*" to him meant, over and above the frock-coat and the writing-desk, the raki-bottle, the gaming-table, and the heavy bribe. The Kurd official, untouched by this rule

of life, was a very different person. The might of the arm, rather than the might of the purse, was the principal factor to reckon with in dealing with him. Beyond the first formal greeting the Vali pays us little attention. Coffee and cigarettes are passed round, and he falls to his work again. A ceaseless stream of clerks and officials crawl obsequiously into the great presence. Papers are perused and documents signed.

Meanwhile, there is no time to observe the other members of the party. The divan round the room is crowded with visitors. Everybody crosses his hands on his stomach, and nobody smiles. If the Vali addresses one of them, he will rise and bow himself three times to the ground, touching the floor with his fingers and raising them to his lips before he ventures to reply. The Muavin sits with clasped hands in attitude of humblest deference. Near the Vali, in place of honour, sits the sheikh of the local Dervishes, a quaint figure in his conical hat of brown felt and flowing robes of black. Mild and benevolent of countenance, the old Dervish is often the most attractive of the company. In Asia Minor the Dervishes are to be found everywhere. Unorthodox and mystic in faith, the fear and wonder of all true Sunnis, the Government is yet politic enough to lend them countenance. Their influence among the peasantry, and especially among the women of the country, is deep-rooted. Orthodox Mohammedanism can make no such impelling appeal to the child of Anatolia. In the veins of the peasant girl still flows the blood of the maiden who revelled in Cybele's honour on the mountain-tops of Phrygia, and who can

doubt that it is of that primitive religion of ecstasy that the old Dervish still is witness ? Much less attractive is the figure who sits beside him—the leading *mollah* (priest) of the town. Frigid orthodoxy, stern and unbending, breathes with his every breath. Narrow and bigoted, every line of the inflexible mouth expresses his creed. I only once saw a Mohammedan priest unbend to us, with anything approaching geniality, and on that occasion it was evident the raki-bottle had conduced to it. It was in the house of a leading merchant, and his only other guest was the *kaimmkakam* (governor of the district). The merchant and the official were a little embarrassed by their friend's conviviality, but reminded me that, considering his class, I must be lenient. It is curious that among the class least of all influenced by contact with Christians, intemperance should be, even rarely, found. The smartest figure of the party is the *Binbashi* of the local garrison. These officers are always spick and span, atoning, by their faultless get-up, tight uniforms and shining boots, for the rags and tatters of the men in their command. The military power is distinct from the civil in the provinces, and the *Binbashi* owes no allegiance to the Vali, but it is politic to keep on good terms. Hidden in the darkest corner of the divan, one little figure, generally toothless and very greasy, is seldom absent. This is the Jew, inevitable appendage of corrupt and tottering Governments.

At one *konak* which gave us entertainment in Asia Minor, this old son of Abraham had just arrived after crossing the desert from far Baghdad. He was full of

the horrors of the road, the wild beasts, the lack of water, the absence of shelter. The Vali of the place was bent, for reasons best known to himself, on preventing our crossing that same desert. Mesopotamia was risky, no doubt, from the frequency of Arab raids, but this no good Turk dared admit. "Thanks to the Padishah, the road is safe enough; it is only the dirt and the discomfort—no one can help that." So the Vali has inspired the Jew to dissuade us by every means in his power, and the latter goes on picturing the startling phantoms to be encountered. "In Es-Schatt (the Tigris) too," he adds, finally, "there are crocodiles; and sometimes they upset the rafts of travellers. Now and again also the Arabs, firing at the crocodiles from the bank, hit a passing raft by mistake. They mean no harm—of course not; it is a work of the greatest humanity to shoot the crocodiles. The Arabs are the gentlest and kindest of men." He gives up at last; even crocodiles will not deter us.

Further east there were more pathetic figures to be found at the *konak*. These were the political exiles. They were usually Mohammedans of noble birth and superior education; the eastern provinces abounded with them. In a place such as Diarbekr or Mossul, the man who could talk a little French and could tell you most about the condition of the country, who had the best manners and spoke the best Turkish, was generally found on inquiry to be an exile. Their superior education had been their destruction. They may or may not have had leanings to the "Young Turkey" party. One of those we met had for years been

editor of a Stamboul newspaper; one day it was proclaimed seditious. Seized from his house by night, he was carried to a ship bound for Alexandretta, and taken, alone and penniless, to this distant part of the Empire. For six years he had languished at Urfa. Fortunately for him the Vali had some leanings himself to freedom; hence his appointment, too, to a distant post. He and the exile had made friends. Reshid Bey's account of his condition and history, told in broken French and a scared undertone, was enough to melt a hard heart. The timid sympathy we offered him was warmly responded to. For six years he had never ridden more than one hour's distance from the town, and then only under a guard. How many more years he would languish in the desolation of Mesopotamia—his only diversion a massacre perhaps—no one could tell. Another of his class, a fine Albanian Turk whom we met at Diarbekr, was in even sadder plight, for no Vali befriended him. A note addressed to "Her Excellency, Miss Princess," and a secret message through a Turkish sympathiser, besought us to allow him a passage on our raft to Baghdad, in disguise as a servant. Escape thence on a British boat might be possible. If we had granted all the requests made to us to lead exiled Mohammedans and persecuted Christians from the country, our retinue would have been an imposing one.

Introductions to the whole company over, and coffee and cigarettes despatched, conversation and compliments begin. The Vali turns from his desk. His work is over. "No, we need not apologise for our travelling

clothes ; is not our noble birth written in our features so that all may see ? " (At this point the Muavin nudges me, " Say the same to him.") The Vali " hopes the superb air of the Sultan's dominions has put us into the best of health, hopes also that the health of his august brother, the Pasha (my father), is good. By the bye, is the royal Pasha, my father, in favour just now with the Padishah of Inghiterra, and has the Padishah given him presents ? " But the Vali is itching to hear something nearer home. We have been to Konia—we have seen the new *konak* there ; is it as big as this one ? He has heard it insinuated that it is bigger. No, it is not so big ? " *Mashallah,* Allah is good. It was as I expected." Assured, the Vali is all politeness again. " How many sheep and oxen has his noble brother the Pasha, my father ? How many storeys has he to his house ? How many soldiers under him, how many sons, how many *chiftliks* (farms) ? Are his sons all Pashas ? No, one is a *mufti* (lawyer) and one will be an *imam* (priest). Is it customary then for the sons of a Pasha to enter the professions ? Did the Valideh Sultana (my mother) cry much when I left her ? How could she let me go ? There is a woman's Government (*cari-devlet*), is there not, in Inghiterra ? " He has heard the women rule the men there, and women's word is law. " Well, well," with a shrug of his shoulders, " *bagálim* (wait awhile), so perhaps it will be here some day." Will the princesses come to dinner with him next day ? We accept, and a clap of the hands brings a servant flying to the door. " The Pashas will dine with me to-morrow.

Let the cook produce a royal feast. Let there be *chorba* and *pilaf* and *kebab* and *dolmas*, and *ragout*, and *helva* and *rahâtlakoun ;* let the mutton be cooked in seven different ways, and let the coffee be of the best the bazaars can produce." Now he must show us the most important room in the *konak*, a small one further along the corridor. A long table surrounded by twenty chairs reveals the Council Chamber. At the head of the table is the President's chair where the Vali presides over his faithful ministers. The chair is offered to me. " Pasha Effendi, you shall sit in this chair to-day, you shall be lord of my lands, and I your humble servant."

Next day, in the ordinary course of events, we are entertained at the *konak* with a state dinner. The Vali, the Muavin, and ourselves constitute the party. There are fourteen courses, and each course would provide a good dinner for ten men, but etiquette forbids our refusing one of them. " It is wonderful," as the Muavin said to me under his breath, when we had reached course number nine, " how Allah comes to one's aid on these occasions." Dinner over, two entertainments are offered for our diversion. Nothing shall be lacking that could please us. Both the horses and the harem shall be exhibited. The horses come first. Half a dozen of His Excellency's favourite Arabs, magnificent beasts from Mesopotamia, are trotted up and down in the square of the *konak*. The grooms who ride them are Armenians. Great stress is laid on that fact. They are quite exceptionally devoted to their master. He, too, has shown an almost

exaggerated favouritism for that particular race. This information is specially necessary, seeing this particular Vali won a name for himself in Armenia in 1896—a name at which Europe in those days grew pale.

Next we visit the harem. The Vali himself escorts us into the sacred precincts, where he leaves us for half an hour in the company of his *Khanem* (lady). "She is worth more to him than his horses," and indeed she is more impressive if less attractive. It is becoming the fashion among the upper classes to possess only one wife. If the wife is childless, the new fashion offers her, at any rate, but few pleasures. Deprived of the gossip and the thrilling intrigue of the ordinary harem, life is rather a wearisome business to the solitary *Khanem*. Certainly so our present hostess found it.

Robed in her long coat of black satin and golden fox-fur, petticoat of violet velvet and embroidery at the throat, she lolls about the cushions of the divan. It must be many years since she was beautiful. Her eyelids are thickly blacked with *kohl*, and she eyes us somewhat sulkily as she puffs away at her cigarette. Conversation is left entirely to her maid, a garrulous Armenian woman, whose chief duty it is to entertain the guests. She genuinely loves her mistress, and she loves still more to relate her mistress's woes.

"Oh, it is dull nowadays for the gracious *Khanem!* She came here long years ago from gay Stamboul, and has never seen her mother since. She was only fifteen then—a happy child, and they told her pleasant things of the city that was to be her home. It was

always warm there, and the mountains were white with snow behind the plains; there would be picnics on the yellow sea-sands in the hot summer evenings, and great ladies from far Kurdistan would come down to visit her, bringing with them the silks of Persia, and strings of white pearls from the Gulf. The Vali was young and handsome in those days, and he really loved his bride. That voyage from Stamboul to Mersina was all delightful. She could even unveil in the little space set apart for the Pasha's harem, and play with two other little brides who belonged to a Pasha in Beyrout. Well, that was very long ago. The Vali was good still to the *Khanem*, but things were not all rose-coloured in the harem." A tall girl holding a tray of sweets in the doorway makes a little movement of irritation after the last remark. She has quantities of fair hair. The Armenian casts an ominous glance in her direction. Poor Circassian girl, unwilling disturber of the peace of the harem!

"And Allah has given the *Khanem* no child—not even a girl," goes on Hosanna, the garrulous Armenian, "and there is not a single lady of her position in the city, no one to drop in and gossip of an afternoon. How is she to pass her time? In her young days the ladies of Stamboul did not learn to read and write as they do now. Half the day is spent in dressing, but there is no one to admire the dresses. Some days nothing will rouse her, not even stories of the trouble. She will do nothing but smoke and sulk and cry, till the *kohl* is all over her cheeks, and she isn't worth a glance." The Armenian massacres are always referred

to in Turkey by the discreet of every race as, *par excellence*, " the trouble."

One hardly knew which of the two women was the more to be pitied. Both had drunk the cup of bitterness to the dregs. The Armenian had lived through the massacre of Trebizond, had seen her home burned and her husband clubbed, had seen her baby starve at her breast, and could look forward to nothing but an exiled and lonely old age. But the Vali's wife had lost even more, the love of life itself. These two women of hostile class and race and religion clasped hands, not unkindly, over the dumb sorrows of their blighted womanhood.

V

THE OFFERING OF HAIR

THE short October evening was closing in fast. Already one pale star trembled fitfully over the placid waters of the lake, which, stainless and unruffled, lay among its sheltering hills. The great lake of Ascania, overshadowed on three sides by the wooded spurs of distant Olympus, is flanked on the east by the ruined city of Nicea. The long battlemented walls, crumbling and moss-grown, line the edge of the water; within in chaotic piles, stand the ruins of church and castle, theatre and bath, lofty archway and turret.

Some walnut trees, the dank leaves falling silently and fast, the branches almost bare, stretch their twisted fingers to the sky. Long wreaths of white mist lie like shrouds on the darkening surface of the lake, and curl in and out among the decaying ruins. The sunset over the water stains the crumbling walls rose-red. Among the old buildings, huddled in squalid heaps of mud, lies the modern village of *Isnîk* (Nicea). Beyond a handful of old churches still in use, and the two or three simple white minarets of the mosques, it has little to boast of. Through the middle runs the shabby roofed-in bazaar, where the stock articles of every provincial *charshi* (shop), scarlet leather shoes, brass

and copper cooking-pots, sacks of yellow maize, boxes of brown figs, lent patches of colour to the sombre litter of mud and stone. The children, unkempt and ragged, dart about like sprites in the twilight, and the day-long cry for *baksheesh*—first symptom always of the demoralising hand of the West—has died away with the sinking of the sun. The evening meal is preparing in many a mud house, and the blue smoke, sweet and dry, rises warm through the heavy damp.

It is Sunday evening, and we have pitched the camp at Nicea for two nights. The day has been hot and sultry, and mules and muleteers, Greek and Turk alike, have spent the day in rest. Small and rather cheerless look the two white tents at this hour. Daylight is almost gone and the camp fire has burnt low. Constantine, the Greek cook, his *yampji* (overcoat) wrapped around him, still slumbers under a walnut tree outside the camp; the muleteers are haggling over an *oke* (a weight) of corn in the bazaar; Ibrahim, the Turk, pitcher of tents and general handy man, sits silent and cross-legged outside my tent, alternately rolling and smoking interminable cigarettes. A caravan of camels, carrying corn to the coast at Ismid, has arrived in the afternoon, and the mud-stained beasts, their loads beside them, lie sweating under the wall of the city beyond our camp. The bewildering uproar of the caravan's arrival has sunk to the occasional faint and comfortable gurgle of a camel, a sleepy *yallah* (by Allah!) of the drivers at their coffee, and the soothing hubble-bubble of the *narghileh* pipes. Beyond an early mass in the old Greek church,

I have spent the day on my camp-bed. Seen through the depressing effects of a touch of fever, Nicea has looked disappointingly poor and squalid to-day. The wide-open tent door reveals the great entrance-gate to the city, the long line of wall, the tower of the "Church of the Council," all in fact which makes up the ancient Nicea. But it is difficult, with a headache, to realise the significance of the venerable dispute which made Nicea famous. Unreal and dim are the figures of Arius and stormy Athanasius, the huge caravans with their gorgeous trappings that once entered the city, the interminable retinues of bishops and priests and monks, of learned theologians and grave philosophers, of hair-splitting casuists, of sombre schoolmen and doctors of the law, with all their slaves and followers, gathered all of them from every corner of Europe to attend the famous Council. In hazy procession they pass through my mind, and alternately dozing and weaving ghostly pictures, I have spent the day in my tent.

I become aware of a sudden that Ibrahim is standing just outside my tent. I can hear the rustling of his coarse felt jacket against the door. Something is troubling him, for he sighs heavily, groaning low to himself as the true Osmanli always will when burdened in spirit. "*Amán, amán!*" (Dear, dear!) he mutters under his breath; then, recovering himself, puffs vigorously for a moment at his cigarette. "*Weh, weh!*" (Alas, alas!) he breaks out again, and comes a step nearer to the door. "*Ne dir, Ibrahim?*" (What is it?) I called out to him at last, and, hesitating, he

comes into the tent, and stands at the foot of the bed.

Ibrahim is a typical Turk of the villages. Tall, erect, closely knit, of enormous physical strength and endurance, he is as different from the Turk of the towns as he is from the Greek. He is dressed in his best clothes to-day, which, stitched up in a white cloth, are carried from place to place on a mule's back. Very becoming to his fine figure and copper-skinned face are the white felt zouave and breeches, buttoning down to the ankle and braided with blue, the scarlet slippers and fez, the gaily coloured sash. I have not seen him since the morning, and he bends to give me the familiar salaam, raising my hand to his forehead and lips with simple, graceful gestures. Something is on his mind, for he still stands hesitating, and in reply to my inquiry is confused and indirect.

Looking round to see that nobody is near, he comes a step nearer, and in uncertain accents begins. "*Pasha Effendi*, I would say something to you—*amma* (but)——" and he stops short again—"*Jánem sigiler*" (My spirit is troubled). "*Haide, Ibrahim*," I urge him encouragingly, patting his hand as he kneels beside me. "Your fever, Pasha, has it passed from you?" "It will pass in the night, Ibrahim—already it is better." "But, Pasha—see—would you permit——" Then he breaks off again. "*Amán, amán!*" he exclaims, impatient with himself, distressed. But next time he will be bold. Pulling himself together, he begins once more. Nobody is listening. My tent is a little away from the rest,

and Constantine, behind time as usual, has but now gone into the bazaar to buy fresh charcoal for his *mangal* (brazier). The *zaptiehs* are bending round the camp fire trying to induce it to burn up. "See, Pasha, listen to me, *isitma* (fever) is bad, an evil thing. It has not left you. To-morrow we must strike the camp early. It is eight hours to Lefke, where we join the *chemin-de-fer*. If we are late, we wait there three days for the next train. There it is terrible—all *chül* (desert), *su yok, yimurta yok, süt yok, hich yok,*" he explains expressively (No water, no eggs, no milk, no nothing!). "It would vex you to wait there. Therefore you must be well immediately—*isitma* must go from you." He pauses, and I wonder what will be the upshot of this lengthy speech. "Pasha—if I tell you of a cure, quick and certain, to be made *now*, to-night—will you tell no one, not Constantine, not the *Yuzbashi* (captain)—above all, not Mustafa Chawush—will you promise?" Mustafa Chawush (the sergeant of the *zaptiehs*) is, as I have observed on many a ride together, a pillar of Sunnite orthodoxy, the cut-and-dried product of a provincial *medresseh*. No magic, no *jinn* (ghosts), no black arts for him. I begin to suspect what Ibrahim's cure will mean. "I tell no secrets, friend," I assure him, my interest aroused at last. "Then, Pasha, *kálk, gel, haide*" (Get up, come, hasten). Like the true Turk, his orders are brief and prompt.

I obey, and together, furtively, we slip out of the camp, and in the faint and uncertain light of the rising moon, are lost behind the heap of ruins behind.

Holding my hand, and stumbling much, he leads me over the stones and rubbish of the broken walls, through the black shadow of a splendid archway, and we find ourselves in the Moslem *mezárlik* (cemetery). Nothing is more melancholy than a cemetery in Mohammedan countries. Mournful and desolate, the bare white tombs of the faithful stretch up the side of the low hill behind the town. The pale moon catches one by one the thin stone tombstones, each capped with its one decoration, the stone *tarbush* (fez). At the further end of the cemetery, separate from the rest, stands a large whitewashed *turbeh* (large tomb), the familiar resting-place of some skeikh, or holy man. Hither Ibrahim leads me—a breath of wind greets us on the higher ground, rustles in the coarse grass among the tombs, and sighs round the white *turbeh*.

"Sit down!" is the command, and I sit obediently on the step of the tomb. Along one side of it runs an iron grating, rusty and weather-beaten. Through it you see the coffin, the narrow Moslem bier, the green turban of the *hajji* (the pilgrim to Mecca) folded round a fez at the head. It is not much that can be seen within, for the holes of the grating, as I expected, are partly filled with dirty pieces of rag and what looks like little tails and curls of hair. While I examine them, Ibrahim is fumbling in the capacious depths of his leather waist-belt, and I make out all manner of strange objects, rain-soaked and discoloured, stuck and dried into the grating. There are plenty of rags, bits of the common red or blue

DERVISHES CARRYING OFFERINGS FROM THE SICK TO A SHRINE

material of the country people's dresses, wisps of hair, coarse and fine, human and animal; little strings of beads, the *tesbíh* (rosary), beloved of the faithful, here and there the magic blue bead, so potent to scare away the Evil Eye. Stitched into a little cotton bag are tiny sharp objects, which I discover on examination to be the nail-parings of human hands, and hard substances which are human teeth. "Leave them alone, Pasha," Ibrahim reprimands me severely. Do I handle too lightly the dear polluted things? So much they have meant to men, so much of human suffering, of human desire is bound up with them. I know now why Ibrahim has brought me here.

"Now let down your hair." I obey, and when it all hangs over my shoulders, Ibrahim kneels down beside me. He selects carefully a straggling wisp, and holding it secure between finger and thumb, he proceeds to cut it off, somewhat clumsily, with his bone-bladed hunting-knife. "Now hold it while I tie it together." Carefully, with clumsy fingers, on which barbarous gold rings of the peasant gleam in the faint light, the hair is tied with a white thread. Then he rises, looks about for a part of the paling which bears the least number of offerings, and ties it firmly to a little rusty bar. "Look at it well now, Pasha," and as he fastens it, he mutters over it, deliberately and with emphasis, a formula unknown to me. "Tell me what you say," I ask, eager to lose nothing. For a moment he looks despairing—he knows but one word of English, "Good-bye." Ha! it has dawned on him—that word will exactly

suit the occasion — "*Bák*, Pasha" (look), he says excitedly, "*Isitma* (fever) —*isitma*—good-bye, *haide!*" Ah! I understand. The evil is transferred, the fever is left behind with the wisp of hair. It is tied to the wonder-working *turbeh*, "nailed," as it were, "to the cross."

Now we must go; no time to be lost. "Quick, quick, Pasha." Why this hurry all of a sudden? I rise reluctantly. It is rather pleasantly weird up here, a little eerie too among the tombs. I would like to stay here. The lake gleams silver below, and the camp fire lights up the line of the wall, cheerful and warm. I have no desire to move yet awhile. But Ibrahim is insistent. "*Haide, haide, Pasha,*" he urges uneasily, and for excuse "*guech dir*" (It grows late). He takes my hand and draws me hastily down the hill. It is only when I happen to turn round for a last look at the scene—I want to impress it on my mind—that his terror of dawdling near the tomb gets the better of him. "*Yapma, yapma böyle!*" (Do not, do not do so!), he cries vehemently, angrily, and then again, "*Bákma, bákma*" (Do not look), as he puts his hand roughly before my eye, and with the other drags furiously at my arm. I can get no explanation from him of why it is so horribly dangerous to look back at the tomb. Ibrahim himself does not know.

As we sit after supper at peace round the camp fire, I ask him again, "*Nichin?*" (Wherefore?). He shakes his head, but he only answers gravely, "*Pasha, 'ayb-dir*" (It is forbidden).

The words come back to me, and they are full of meaning now.

"Remember Lot's wife." She looked back at the doomed city, and she was turned to a pillar of salt.

VI

THE MILK OF A YELLOW COW

"*Gine khasta! Amán, amán!*" (Ill again! dear, dear!) and Hassan waves his hands dolefully over me. Five days of driving rain, five days of ploughing on stumbling pack-horses through a dreary litter of loose stones and black mud, and I am reduced, not reluctantly, to my bed. This occurrence is always the signal for general confusion and depression in the camp. Hassan generally loses his head, the tents are so badly pitched they sway about like crazy things all night, and supper is at least two hours late. We were camped outside a minute Turkish village in the Cilician Plain. Next day we were to begin to ascend the Amanus ridge. The place was low and fever-haunted. But the sun had burst forth at last, and the scene was almost English in its peaceful pastoral beauty. Tiny fields, bright green and rain-bedewed, are divided by trim hedges of sweet-briar, only distinguished from English hedges by a straggling undergrowth of prickly pear. Small dun-coloured cattle are grazing in the fields, and in the village the blue smoke of the evening fires rises

straight and sweet from each house. A flock of little black goats, folded for the night in a square mudyard, lend the note of comfortable scrabbling and grunting which goats everywhere provide. Everything combines to produce the gentle and stagnant calm of evening in early autumn.

Our two tents, rain-sodden and terribly mud-bespattered, are pitched on a patch of grass outside the village. The ground is too wet for a fire, but Haroutin (the Armenian cook) has lit the *mangal* (brazier), and the pungent smell of burning charcoal pervades the camp. A man in a blue tunic, with stupid, staring eyes, has brought a dozen trout to sell, slung on a string, and has sat for at least an hour on a rock outside, his fish dangling between his brown legs, gazing at me, rapt and dumb. A little party of tall Kurd women from a mountain village an hour distant have brought a handful of oranges, and stand like statues outside the tent, holding by the hand a child of two in a little scarlet *'abá* (cloak). I watch them from my tent. In response to my "*Buyurun, khanemler*" (Welcome, ladies) they stoop gracefully, and sit down on the bed opposite mine, saluting me gravely. These Kurdish women are noted for their looks. Their heavy square head-dresses, concealed by flowing white veils down their backs, oblige them to hold themselves each like a stately queen. Their features are angular, with low foreheads, but the lustrous beauty of their almond-shaped eyes softens the severity of the grave faces. Hassan has gone into the village to buy *karpuz* (water-melon), the only

food for which my soul longs. Haroutin is singing nasally a fragment of a hymn picked up in an American mission, the soldiers are bargaining over the corn for their horses. Our usual guard of *zaptiehs* is exchanged now for one of *nefer* (soldiers), for the route between the coast and the Tigris is supposed to require their more imposing escort.

The *Yuzbashi* (captain), a loquacious and somewhat officious little man, is, I can hear, returning from the village, Unwillingly I anticipate a lengthy discourse with him. He counts it his prerogative to spend the evening in our tent. I can hear he is arguing with Hassan, for their voices are loud and excited. Hassan is groaning and snorting, as is his wont when vexed, and the little *Yuzbashi* is vociferating fussily. There is a regular scuffle of words outside the tent, and then his cheery "*Nasl, Pasha Effendi?*" (How are you?) at the door. In he comes all bustle and good temper—he passes from one mood to another like a child—salutes the stately ladies on the bed, and sits down on the portmanteau at my side. The whole place might belong to him, so consequential and important is his air. He produces his cigarette case and offers us one all round.

"*Shimdi, Pasha Effendi*" (Now then, Pasha), he begins with great significance, "you are ill. Already you have been five days ill. You rode through the storms like a lion (*arslán-gibi*), but you were ill. To-day you can rise no more." He clears his throat after this oratorical effort, and stops to light his cigarette, which has gone out. I offer no remarks

on the statement, but merely ask with indifference, "What then?" "I intend to cure you, Pasha Effendi. "*Sahíh Effendim*" (All right), I reply, unmoved. "Bother the man!" I ejaculate under my breath in English, thinking some horrible potion is to be my fate. What is the man going to do? Kneeling down beside me, he begins pushing, all too roughly, the hair back from my forehead. The man reeks of garlic, and when I try to push him away, splutters volubly. "*Istimem, Yuzbashi*" (I don't wish it), I protest, much annoyed, and devoutly wishing I had not so tamely submitted to be "cured." Vehemently I extricate myself from his grasp. The poor *Yuzbashi* is crestfallen. He turns away, and stands with his back to me, looking out into the camp. I believe there are tears of disappointment in his eyes. Then my conscience begins to prick me. "*Zarar yok, dostoum*" (Never mind, friend), I comfort him, "only explain to me exactly what the cure will be." He turns round and begins with a gulp in his throat to explain. As he tells me, he forgets his humiliation and is all importance again. "Pasha Effendi, you must understand one thing. It is the *ján* within you that troubles. It is he who makes you ill. He struggles to escape and cannot, therefore he afflicts you thus." I know it is hopeless to protest that nothing at all troubles me, that I am only tired. The camp has made up its mind that I am ill, and the village has been duly informed on the point. So I desist from remonstrance. "Go on, *Yuzbashi*." "Pasha Effendi, if the *ján* can escape, you will rest and sleep. Then

you will quickly be well again. *I* must assist him. I shall bring him forth, and you will be troubled no more."

We had often talked of the *ján*, that mysterious soul or spirit in man, which causes so many of his troubles, which fights with him, and vexes him, and which in sleep can escape from him, none knoweth whither. It both gives life, and by leaving the body, takes it away. Yet it can leave behind sufficient of itself to retain life during sleep, and no evil consequences need follow its nocturnal journeys.

"How will you get him out, *Yuzbashi?*" "Leave that to me," he answers, vastly impressed with his own importance. "All Konia knows of my skill. When all others fail, I succeed." So saying, he knelt down beside me again, took firm hold of my head, and with both his thumbs pressed firmly, even vigorously, behind my ears. The operation was decidedly unpleasant, and I lift my hands to release myself. "He is out, Pasha, I felt him," he cries triumphantly, standing over me and shaking with excitement. "*Kálk*" (Get up), "you are cured." "I felt nothing," I protest, much disappointed. I had verily thought to see the *ján* escape in flesh and blood from the tent. "But I *felt* him, Pasha, he slipped through my hands. He is gone from you. Now you have only to lie still and rest. You will be well to-morrow." So saying, the little man bowed himself, for all the world like the professional physician, from my presence. I quite agreed that a night's rest would effect the cure. The ladies, too, rise and take their cere-

monious departure. They have been silent, perhaps not very credulous, spectators of the cure.

It is almost dark when half an hour later Hassan appears at the door. He is in an extremely bad temper. So much I had anticipated. Hassan's anger is always aroused by my admitting strangers to my tent, be they *zaptiehs* or villagers, officials or peasants. To do such a thing is *'ayb* (forbidden)—forbidden by whom I do not inquire. For anything to be *'ayb* disposes of it finally. Hassan's temper takes the form of a volley of angry threats—he will travel no longer with us—a storm of oaths, blows and kicks to the rest of the caravan, then an outburst of childish tears, a paroxysm of remorse, and the final reconciliation, coffee, and the cigarette of peace.

But to-night Hassan has an extra grievance. Not only have I entertained visitors in my tent all the evening, I have so far forgotten myself, humiliated myself, Hassan, and all the caravan, as to allow the *Yuzbashi* to attempt to cure my sickness. Not that he has succeeded—nobody but the *Yuzbashi* himself supposes such a thing. The rascal is sitting in the *khan* at this very moment prating about his cure—he who has never even been through a *medresseh* (the mosque school), and only got a smattering of contemptible education at one of the *Rushdi* schools (the new Government schools formed on a French model), and he has dared to try to cure my sickness—he, the upstart from Stamboul, who is no Turk, the new-fangled product of Western science—he shall soon learn the value of his arts, "*Yallah!* he shall."

It is useless to explain that to squeeze the soul out of the patient's throat is not quite the art of medicine as taught in the West. He would not have listened to me. And I know very well what has really upset Hassan. It is that the *Yuzbashi* has encroached on *his* prerogatives, he who is leader, guardian, cavass, doctor, and nurse of the camp in one, and who resents with bitterness the interference of any outsider whatever. Poor Hassan can only be comforted in one way. I must ask him to cure me himself. But I hesitate—why should I submit to drastic cures at the hands of rival medicine-men ? I only want to be left alone, a night's rest is all I need. All the same, this state of things cannot be allowed to last. The whole camp is disorganised, and discipline is conspicuous by its absence when Hassan is in a rage. "*Peki dostoum*," I comfort him at last, "it *is* true the *Yuzbashi's* cure did me no good. I am still sick. Could you perhaps suggest a cure yourself ? "

Hassan tries in vain to conceal his satisfaction, but he struggles to keep up the air of offended dignity while, all condescension, he sits down to tell me of the only real cure for my illness. The nature of the malady must first be diagnosed. Its leading feature was the yellowness of my complexion. This was quite new to me, but I agree weakly. Was not a yellow skin—yellow in the whites of the eyes—a sign of jaundice ? And what did jaundice mean but that the sun had looked at me for evil ? The sun, of course, was the offender. He must be paid out in his own

coin. Like must be treated with like. I must eat or drink some yellow substance to counteract his evil influence. Then he would be demolished for the time, his influence annulled. The most potent of prophylactic yellows is the yellow cow. Such is savage philosophy—or shall we say savage homœopathy ?—all the world over. Did I possess a piece of amber ?—a necklet or *tesbih* (string of beads) perhaps ? If so, it should be dipped in the milk of a yellow cow, soaked in it all night, and worn to-morrow as an amulet. That would establish and make permanent the cure. No, I had no such piece of amber. Well, then, no matter. To drink the milk of the yellow cow would be equally effective, so long as it contained two at least of the cow's yellow hairs. The idea is nauseating, but my interest in so obvious an instance of sympathetic magic, fortifies me to face the ordeal.

"Where can we procure the milk ?" I ask, remembering that all the cows of the village are dun-coloured, not red or yellow. The Kurd woman here will fetch it. Hassan, I perceive, has been in collusion with the ladies, and a hurried consultation outside the tent, where they still linger, soon sends them off in a hurry to their own village where the cattle are correctly coloured.

Late that evening, when the camp is quiet, and only a pale new moon looks into my tent, Hassan brings me the precious milk. He carries it in a wooden bowl. By the flickering light of the lantern that hangs over my head, I can see, with disgust, two

substantial red hairs on the surface. "Must I really, Hassan?" My spirit fails me at the last. "*Pasha Effendi*," he utters solemnly, "*olur*" (It will be, it must be). Then standing over me, he lifts his hands in blessing. "*Shimdi, Pasha, rahat*" (Now, Pasha—rest).

Next morning the cure is complete. The sun is successfully outwitted. "*Mashallah!*" (Praise God!) is the comment of the caravan when I emerge from my tent at sunrise and call for my horse for the day's march.

VII

MAGICAL KNOTS

'Ádet (custom) in Turkey is at the root of civilised life. But all over the world custom dies hard. Ages after the reason for the custom is forgotten and disbelieved, the custom itself will tarry, lonely relic of the childhood of the world, cast up and clinging to the shores of time. It is not only among the simple and uneducated that such customs linger. All the world over they are found in the towns as well as the villages, among the well-to-do as well as the peasants. All over the Near East we found them among the villagers, the soldiers, the *zaptiehs*, the shepherds. But we found them too, persistent and loth to die, in the *konak*, the schools, the merchants' mart. Education in those countries, at least the education of the Military Schools of Constantinople, cannot eradicate them. Education in Constantinople does not dig deep enough. It does not reach down to a man's philosophy, much less does it meddle with *'ádet* (custom). It only scrapes the surface, the shallow soil in which man's superficial life is carried on, his trade, his book knowledge, his surface accomplishments, his money-making. In Europe education digs a little deeper. It may partially succeed in modifying a man's view of life. It may in-

fluence his philosophy. But even in Europe it hardly touches his customs. It is only a select few whose education leads them to criticise the ways and manners on which society is built. Fewer yet are those whom it leads to consider the why and the wherefore of mere arbitrary customs—of putting on mourning, for instance, or saying grace before dessert.

We need not wonder then that custom, arbitrary, primitive, long meaningless, still flourishes unabated in Asiatic Turkey. It is a land of mental lights and shades, of shadowy border lines, of flickering ideas, of spontaneous revivals. It is the very soil in which custom thrives, warm, full of sentiment, well filtered with the emotions and the symbols of varying ages and races and religions, among a people tenacious, jealous of the past, inclined to mysticism.

Ferid Pasha* is Vali (governor-general) of Adana, the long sea-lined province of south-eastern Asia Minor. The capital is the most civilised and Western of all the large Turkish towns of the eastern provinces. Until you come to Baghdad, no city can boast a finer specimen of a government *konak* (office and residence of the Vali), nor more imposing barracks. Both are newly whitewashed, and not, as is usually the case, stained all over with black patches where the paint is rubbed off, or the walls are splashed with mud. The open *meydán* (square) in front of the *konak* is spacious and well kept, and a dusty bed of purple petunias flourishes at the foot of the flight of steps that leads to the official entrance. Fine Arab horses, led by

* For obvious reasons I give no real names.

smart negro grooms, are here led up and down for the delectation of honoured guests.

His Excellency the Vali is a sportsman and a connoisseur of horses. Fifteen years as the Vali of the Yemen have cultivated in him the taste for thoroughbred Arabs. He is a man of the world too. Though his home is a fastness in the Kurdish mountains, he has spent many years in Stamboul. He is no infrequent guest too at Yildiz itself, for his Imperial master, Abdul Hamid, counts him as one of his personal friends. Of the science and learning of the West he is tolerant though secretly contemptuous. He is hardly more skilled in the literature of his own country. The lore of Persian and Arabic poets, from whence all Turkish learning has sprung, does not appeal to him. His acquaintance with European politics is strictly limited. Of the nature of Western governments he is blissfully ignorant. The *vilayet* of Adana abuts on the Armenian provinces of Turkey, and the permanent sore of the Armenian question affects it vitally. But the Armenian problem had at the time assumed a less troublesome form than the Arab revolt in Yemen, and if Ferid Pasha was good enough for the one, he was more than good for the other. Such was the Sultan's opinion.

On arrival in Adana, we had sent our cards in the usual way to pay our respects to His Excellency. To our surprise he had signified his intention of returning our call in person, an honour seldom paid a traveller by the highest of Turkish officials. Our royal connection, an illusion still maintained in the city, must be

the reason. Our hospitable hosts—the American missionary and his wife—have lent us their little sitting-room in which to receive the great man. The Armenian servants have scoured the place till it shone, the lady of the house has adorned it with tasteful vases of flowers in European style, and the missionary's little daughter stands sentinel at the door, ready, for reasons of calculated expediency, to drop him a curtsey at the door. The missionary's wife and I await him in the parlour. I am alone with her to-day, for my usual companion, Y., is down with fever, consequent on ten days' march through the snows of the Taurus. Not even the visit of a Vali can avail to get her out of bed.

Half an hour later we are all seated in state around the neat little sitting-room of the mission-house. At the further end of the room, in the place of honour, the Vali sits, resplendent in scarlet *fez* and frock coat. The missionary's wife and I sit on either side of him. Next to me is the *Muavin*, who interprets, for in the presence of Valis and European missionaries I am thankful to waive any pretensions I may possess to speak the lingo. Next comes the *Mirolai* (Colonel) of the military quartered at Adana, a dapper, French-speaking gentleman from Stamboul. The Armenian pastor of the reformed Church, the Bishop of the Gregorian, and various A.D.C.s and secretaries make up the party. It is altogether a notable assemblage, for does it not contain the whole of the intellect and education of which the province of Adana can boast, not to speak of the refined surroundings of a mission-house, and a cultivated lady from an American college ?

Coffee and cigarettes have been handed round with the usual formalities, and the accustomed interchange of compliments between the Vali and myself has begun. Then comes the expected questions as to Y.'s absence, and my elaborately prepared apology in Turkish, the accuracy of which is strictly circumscribed by the limitations of my speech. "Greatly she grieves not to look at the face of your Excellence." The Vali evinces a most kindly concern. How long has the fever lasted? What are its chief symptoms? Has she seen a doctor? There was, he had heard, a first-rate Greek doctor in the town. If not, "*Haide, Kerem Yuzbashi*" (Off with you, Captain Kerem) — one of the officers in the room—he shall be commanded immediately to appear. Yes, yes, she had seen the doctor. He had prescribed, but without effect. Doubtless the fever must run its course. So far so good. By proposing to summon a European physician the Vali had discharged his debt of recognition to the West, from which we came. Inevitably, in his opinion, the medical resources of that West had proved inadequate, or at least all too tardy in their results. Now the field was clear for more effective operations.

What followed is an instance of the amazing and consummate self-sufficiency, the unconscious egotism, of the Turk. Ferid Pasha must have known very well that among that heterogeneous assembly in the parlour of the Christian missionary, there were many—a majority—who would regard what he did as a joke. He must have been aware that some would condemn it as hocus-pocus, beneath contempt. Two or three at

the very least would frown on it as heathenism. The *Mirolai*, a pillar of Moslem orthodoxy, would report it among the *mollahs* (Moslem clergy). But the true uneducated Turk need consider none of these things. Culture, education, intellectual enlightenment, are powerless before the rooted idea that dominates his whole outlook on life, the idea that, as Turk, he can do no wrong, that he can never make a fool of himself, the idea, in fact, which makes the Turk serenely conscious of his immense superiority to all the rest of the world, and of his ability so to dignify everything he touches. The Vali is bent on loading us with favours. To effect a cure, instant and complete, on the spot, that would be the greatest he could possibly confer. He is going to do it.

With all the studied professional manner of the West, he turns to the lady on his left, the mistress of the house. His request is a humble one, some threads of cotton. While she hastens to rummage in her drawers at the further end of the room, the Vali rubs his hands with content and self-importance. He addresses a facetious remark to the *Mirolai*, and we are impressed, as he intends we shall be, with the careless ease with which he faces a serious operation. The threads of cotton are produced, and again he is all professional seriousness. Ourselves infected with his importance, and the gravity of the task before him, we relapse into respectful silence. Every eye watches him carefully. Not a smile hovers on one of the faces round the room. Throwing down the cigarette he is smoking, and placing the inevitable *tesbih* (string of beads)

on the table, he bends gravely forward, and selects seven of the threads. Muttering some obscure formula over them, he proceeds to tie a knot at one end of the seven. Again a low mutter, and another knot is tied. "That is a prayer," the *Muavin* whispers under his breath to me. He is an Armenian Catholic, but he evidently believes in the cure as much as the Mussulman himself. While the Vali mutters the prayer, he stares, wide-eyed and vacant, before him. Another knot is tied and another prayer. So on till he has tied seven knots at equal distances in the thread. Then he lays it on his knees, and ceremoniously he waves his fat hands over it with the mystic pass.

Gravely the magician turns to me. "Give it to your little friend," he commands me. "Tie it tightly round the wrist of her right hand. Immediately the fever will depart." "*Teshekkür-ederim*" (I thank you, sir) I respond in high Turkish, grateful but bewildered. I have forgotten to prepare a formal speech while I watched the thrilling cure, and my Turkish fails me at the critical moment. But I am none the less conscious of the magnitude of the favour. A magician himself, he, the lord in his province of life and death, has condescended to work his healing arts for our benefit. The company breathes freely again. At last, but only now, I see a twinkle in the missionary's eye.

It was fortunate that Y. took a turn for the better that evening. I was glad I could say she was cured, when the *Muavin* next morning brought us the Vali's compliments and confident inquiries. "*Elbet*" (Of course), was the satisfied response.

What is the meaning of it all? To the Vali and his audience, to all the simple souls, in fact, who practise it, the mystic tying of knots in a thread is merely *'ádet* (custom). But we must remember that *'ádet* in the East is the moral law. No other law at least is more binding. These things are done, and must be done. Nobody asks the reason why, nor the method of their efficacy. That is lost long ago, lost in the twilight-ages of the world, when creeds and systems were unknown. Long before Christianity and Islam joined issue, long before Greek philosopher and Babylonian sage put order and coherence into the vague and shifting thought of the primitive world, so long ago had *'ádet* established itself as the law of the Eastern world. But if we try to get back to that primitive thought from whose roots this vast and arbitrary system of *'ádet* has sprung, what do we find? It is a magic world, a world where, side by side with primitive religion and the priest, is the rule of the magician. The tying of knots, and the negative *untying* of them, is only a magical rite. On the principle of this sympathetic magic, a knot in the physical world can effect in the mental and moral world a like obstruction. A knot is an impediment, an obstacle in a string, a garment. So, morally, it acts on the person it is intended to injure, or conversely, to benefit. You want to cure a fever, for example. Tie a knot, then, in a string—of course with the prescribed prayer—that is the later concession to religion—and just as it obstructs the free passage of your fingers along that string, so it will obstruct and arrest the course of the fever in the system. The

blood which courses so wildly through the veins will be checked, the disturbance caused by the fever will abate. Knots, then, can astringe and prevent. If one knot duly tied with the lawful prayer can avail so much, what cannot seven, the mystic number, do ?

The practice is common all over the world. Nearer home than Asia Minor it is still effective. In Argyllshire only three magic knots are required to cure certain internal diseases. Knots act as preventatives as well as cures. An old Hindoo book warns the traveller on dangerous roads to tie knots in their skirts. They will prevent the approach of harmful spirits.

Commoner still is the negative practice of *untying* knots. The purpose of this is to unloose, to set free, to let escape. Women at critical times all the world over, such as marriage, birth and death, like to undo all knots on their persons. In Saxony, when a woman is in travail, all knots in her garments are untied, and all locks in the house unloosed. In the East Indies, this applies to the whole period of pregnancy. For the whole nine months a woman may wear no knot on her person. Among tribes still lower in the scale of development, the same principle is extended to the father also. After the fourth month of pregnancy he may tie no knots in his own clothes, and, more than that, he may not even sit with his legs crossed. The idea is logical. The knot, the knitting together of objects, would tie up and contract that which ought to be free to expand. The delivery would be impeded. To facilitate it, on the contrary, knots must be untied, locks unloosed, lids lifted, pots and pans opened,

swords unsheathed, spears taken down from their places. Even among the ancient Romans the idea of the potency of knots was so common that Pliny remarks on it, adding that no one ought to sit beside a pregnant woman, or a sick person, or at a council of war, with crossed legs or hands clasped. No real union in marriage could be effected, it was thought, until a knot tied during the marriage ceremony, or a lock closed, had been unfastened.

Something of this idea is doubtless at the back of the Vali's magical knot-cure. The course of the fever will be arrested, the source of its malignancy dried up. So it was. Y. was well next day, cured no doubt by the Vali Pasha. Yet when, ten days later, I am down with fever, and Hassan would do the same for me, fumbling over the string with shaky fingers, for he is tired and cold, and the wind blows out the candle continually in my tent, the cure is less effectual. "Do you believe in it, Hassan—truly, my friend?" I ask him. He shrugs his shoulders and gives a low whistle. I sigh to myself, for I know that something has come into his heart which will not easily go out again. That something is Doubt.

VIII

THE MOSQUE AND THE SACRED CAVE

On the northern slopes of the Taurus Mountains stands Ivriz, the old Hittite sanctuary. From Eregli, the town in the plain below, it is a four hours' ride up to the village. The day we rode there the country was iron-bound with frost, and long icicles fringed the stream in the gorge. As we ate our breakfast outside the tent before the sun rose, the milk froze so fast it had to be broken with a spoon every time we drank. A thick mist hid the plains behind us, and our horses' forelocks were stiff and white. By nine o'clock the sun had burst over the mountains, tearing the mists apart, and chasing them down the valleys. Great white clouds went scurrying off, some of them fading away in the sun, others clinging regretfully to trees and rocks, and dawdling over stagnant pools. The frozen hill-sides began to melt, and the drenched grass shone and sparkled.

These gorges of Taurus are rich in trees. The shivering poplars still cling to their pale leaves, the brown-red walnuts send out rich pungent odours, the dappled stems of the planes shed their cumbrous

bark, the pomegranates fling scarlet splashes among sober reds and browns. We rode up a long narrow gorge, down which a wild stream tumbled. A bold cliff of rock, under which Ivriz hides in its bower of fruit trees, abruptly ends the valley. A path strewn with crisp red leaves wound up the side of the stream under the stems of the trees. The earth was rich and brown. Through the branches were glimpses of dazzling snow. The last fall had brought it very near the fruit trees. As we neared the village, girls, gay clad, peeped at us behind the white veils as they herded the goats. A little shepherd boy in a blue tunic, bolder than the rest, darted out from a crowd of them, and offered me a handful of walnuts. His red lips were stained with them. A squirrel darted across the path, and rabbits paused to look at us. A man fishing with a net in the stream, gave us a string of silver trout. The cold white leaves unfolded their stiff arms as the sun crept into them. The cobwebs on the trees glittered, and the blue-white icicles dripped themselves away. The whole earth sang aloud.

But at my side rode Rejeb the Turk, *Mulasim-sani* (lieutenant) of the Konia *zaptiehs*, and the day awoke no response in his heart. His *keffiyeh* is wound tightly round his head, and his eyes are fastened on his horse's ears. The sunshine is not for him—he awaits the more lasting sunshine of *Jennet* (Heaven). *Jennet* certainly awaits Rejeb *Mulasim*. No man has better qualifications for a berth there.

"Effendim, the paths there are of gold, real gold—

not this sort" (pointing to the brass buttons of his uniform).

"Well, Rejeb, this path of red leaves is better than all the gold of *Jennet*. It is soft to walk upon, and it changes its colour so often."

"But, Effendim, it *costs* nothing. The gold in *Jennet* is *paháli, chok paháli*" (Expensive, very expensive).

He shakes his head over the untold wealth of Allah. "*Chok zenguin dir, Effendim*" (*Very* rich he is).

"Well, Rejeb, I am hungry. I would rather have a *pilaf* than the golden paths of *Jennet*."

"But, Effendim, in *Jennet* there is *kayf* too, *kebab* and *pilaf* every day, and *tutun* (tobacco) as much as one pleases."

Rejeb whistles to himself, and sighs as he feels his empty pouch.

It is noon, and slipping off his horse he throws down his overcoat, takes off his shoes, and begins to pray. My horse takes a long drink at the stream, and then stands motionless blinking at the flies. Rejeb's reverent homage is half drowned by the stream's song. Between each of the parts he turns to see that I am safe.

"Nearly done, Effendim," he cries, before the last repetition; and then, smiling and satisfied, he mounts again, and we gallop after the party ahead.

Rejeb is a Sunni of the strictest type. He is rigidly orthodox in faith, and he revels in his orthodoxy. Nothing comes amiss to him but heresy, but he smells

a heretic a little too quickly sometimes. The Turkish army is the most perfect expression of orthodox Sunniism, and Sunniism is the soldier's own creed. Any deviation from its uncompromising tenets is a slackening of the effectiveness of the army as a fighting force ; and if the soldier starts with a mind as simple, as easily satisfied as Rejeb's, the levelling hand of orthodoxy cannot hurt him.

But in the Turk of the village, the peasant and the shepherd, this mind is rare. That " there is no God but God, and Mohammed is his Prophet," is not the final solution of life to him. Intellectually he would assent to it, but his real religious life has its roots in a far more primitive base. He needs emotion, he clings to mystery, he fears the unseen. It is the Dervish, not the *mollah*, who really appeals to the peasant. It is the *jinn* who haunts the dark pool, and dwells in the ruined tower, who controls his life. Mohammedanism, with its strong broad lines, its exact definitions, its simple solution of difficulties, has very little attraction for him. His is a world of shifting shadows, of pale forms and cloudy border lines. Allah is very vast, but he is cold and unapproachable. There is no getting hold of him, no touching him. The devils and angels and *jinn* are far more palpable and real. Mohammed consecrated them, too, but the stern among his followers eye them with suspicion.

Under the mountain village of Ivriz stands the famous Hittite bas-relief, cut in the face of the red sandstone cliff. A huge God with protruding eyes

offers a fat ear of corn to a diminutive worshipper. Inscriptions in undeciphered Hittite are scrawled around and about the fingers. Beneath the cliff a stream, buried in planes and poplars, trickles slowly. Once a year it is a real torrent, for in the month of May a full-born river bursts from the old cave above the relief, and carries all before it in its mad career.

This is the coming of the God. For him ages ago the sanctuary was honoured. For him to-day the peasants haunt the sacred cave. Allah has no chance beside him. Up in the village above stands the white mosque. That is as it ought to be. It is a very respectable mosque, and a very clean one, cleaner than most, because so few tread its carpets. There, on Friday, the *namaz* is performed, and there once a day at least prayer must be said. But the real life of the village is lived down by the spring. Here young and old foregather. The children play about on the flat rocks. Here the village girl on her bridal eve lingers in the darkness. She throws a new coin, if she can get one, into the stagnant pool, or she flings a mud ball into one of the niches in the cave's roof. If it sticks there, the spirit has heard her prayer—she will have a son. Here mothers with fever-stricken babies come for help. See one now. She cuts a straggling lock from the hot head, and fastens it up in the darkness. Here sickly women themselves and palsied old men crawl into the shadow, and hang up rags from their own infected garments. Here the men gather evening by evening in May to await

the coming of the God. If he tarries long, their hearts are sick. Perhaps he is angry, and who can tell what ill will befall the village if he comes not ?

At the mouth of the cave sits old Ibrahim, sheikh of Ivriz. He is very old, and he shakes with ague. Fever is hard upon him. The frost has nipped his bare knees, and his teeth are chattering, but his eyes are young still, and they shine like lamps in the dim gloom.

" Baba, why do you sit here ? "

" Effendim, I am very old. *Isitma* (fever) has taken me."

" But, Baba, why here in the damp darkness ? On the hill-side the sun is shining."

" Effendim, here I must wait (*beklemeli-im*), I shall be well here. See ! " and he points to the new rag he has just hung over his head.

A crooked old figure he is in his ragged clothes, and his head all swathed in white bands. His cheeks are sunken, and his brown eyes a little startled. All around his head in the gloom hang the beads and the rags and the locks of hair, and Ibrahim, like a spirit himself, surveys them with confidence.

I creep in and sit beside him. Rejeb and the crowd of villagers stand at the mouth. Rejeb wishes I would come out.

" Baba, *who* will make you well ? "

Ibrahim had seen Rejeb's face, and to his mind come visions of the white mosque and the respectable *mollah*.

"*Bilmemki, Effendim*" (I do not know), he answers confusedly. "Allah knows." But under his breath he whispers, "It will come soon, it comes once a year, and it cures us—we who have hung these things," and Ibrahim picks up a string of beads that has fallen, and fastens it up again. The movement brings on his cough, and his old rags shake and shake again. It is .Rejeb's opportunity now, Rejeb the orthodox.

"Effendim, why do you sit in the cave? *Isitma* will seize you, too, and Ibrahim is so old, he can tell you nothing. He can neither read nor write, he has never been to the *medresseh* (college)."

"Well, Rejeb, tell me yourself why the waters rush out once a year."

"It is like this, Effendim. Othman rode past here once—the successor of the Prophet. He was thirsty, and he struck this rock. The water rushed out, and ever since it has come once a year."

"But why do the sick come here? Do the waters heal?" Rejeb is ready for this, too.

"Effendim, the *waters* do not heal. It is Allah. In the *Sunna* it is written that three hundred and sixty-five diseases of men can be cured by *'iláj* (medicine), but some few, and *isitma* (fever) is one, can only be cured by praying on the spots where holy men have stood. Othman stood here on this one. It is Allah's will, Effendim—thus it is written." That is enough for Rejeb. All mysteries are accounted for by "it is written."

But Ibrahim knows better. It is not only the

Moslems who come for healing and help to the sacred waters. Christians come, too, and even the wild Turkomans and the shepherd Yuruks from the hills. These people never heard of Othman. Ibrahim shakes his head.

IX

THE DANCING DERVISHES

WHIRL! Whirl! Whirl! A sweep of shivering white robes, a flutter of twirling figures, the harsh twang of an ancient violin, a deep dirge-like chant—this is the service of the dancing Dervishes. Very different this to the formal and artificial performance that tourists to Constantinople go to see. The service of the dancing Dervishes there is merely one of the sights of the city, of which the casual traveller is a hurried, sometimes amused, spectator. What religious significance is left in a service at which loud-voiced Americans make supercilious jokes, and bored Germans, harassed by disputing dragomans, seize the rare opportunity of a quiet ten minutes' siesta? Here in a little country town of Asia Minor, the *Zikr*, or service of the dancing Dervishes, is the most solemn and intense of all religious ceremonies.

Tourists here are unknown. Religious services are still held for worship, not for show. It is Friday evening, the Sabbath of Islam. Chatting and bargaining with our friends in the bazaar, we had passed a long and sultry afternoon, and as we emerged at

sundown from the gloom of the *bezesten* (bazaar) the muffled clashing of discordant notes from the mosque had arrested me. Just outside the black shadow of the high-pitched bazaar roof stood the minaret of the mosque. A young moon rising behind us made it pale and luminous. The minaret is the one really religious element in Eastern architecture. The rest of a mosque, even in its nobler forms, is spiritually unsuggestive. There is a hopeless complacency about it. There it stands now, squat and square in its uncompromising whitewash. Opposite it some pots and pans of the coppersmiths' bazaar catch the faint moonbeams and glow ruddily. In front winds the dusty white road that leads to the *konak* half a mile away.

It is seldom possible for a traveller to go at will into the village mosques. The dragoman who accompanies him, a native Christian as a rule, sadly demoralised by contact with the West, is a reluctant and unsought visitor. Where the real life of Islam is concerned, the dragoman is the least competent of all men to express an opinion. His company is studiously avoided by Turks of all classes. Happily for us we had no dragoman, and as further guarantee of our friendliness were accompanied by none but Moslem servants. We had been detained in this remote little town for some days, awaiting, not unwillingly, telegrams which, as is the custom in Turkey, never came. We knew our way about the little town, and felt at home there. We had been entertained in Moslem houses, and the chief notables of the place

had taken us graciously under their protection. Our knowledge of Turkish was very limited, but in return for our confidence in our hosts everybody we met was an ally. So when I wanted to have my dinner in a *kebabji* (native eating-house), or sit in the bazaar for an afternoon to sip coffee and puff a cigarette, no objection was raised, and my only difficulty was the rivalry of my hosts.

I wanted now to go into the Dervishes' *tekke*. I knew they held their service on this night. It was close beside us, down that side street.

On this occasion, however, Hassan was not very gracious. Steeped as he is—as many Sunnis are—in the influence of the Dervishes, he is loth to betray the fact to an outsider. He likes to assume ignorance of their services and their doctrines. It is not quite the correct thing to be acquainted with them. But Hassan knows that made-up objections will avail nothing, so reluctantly he goes into the *tekke* and soon comes back with one of the Dervishes themselves, who cordially invites us to the service. Hastily discarding our shoes at the door—we are not here provided with slippers like the tourists in Constantinople—we hurry quietly up the narrow staircase that leads to the women's gallery. The Turkish women, all unveiled, are thoroughly at home up here, carefully concealed as they are by a solid iron grating. Some of them are suckling their babies, and the floor is a crawling mass of children, unkempt and ill-clad, who sprawl and chatter and chuckle in their midst. Little boys of eight and ten, still the spoilt tyrants

of the harem, coax and tease their indulgent mothers. One dim oil lamp lights up the stuffy little gallery. It is a homely and contented party. The women like the excuse of an outing, and a quiet gossip, and the children's chatter is conveniently drowned in the shrill music of the orchestra. The heavy iron grating shuts them out from any real part in the *Zikr*, and, like most Moslem women of the poorer classes, they are not worried with the demands of religion. The little mosque is rectangular and perfectly plain, its only adornment the little painted *mihrab* and a few texts from the Koran scrawled on the walls. The musicians, who occupy a similar gallery next to the women's, perform on instruments more suited to a band of savage players than to the ordered service of a mosque. They are primitive and simple in construction, the skin of the weird wind instruments still rough with bristles. One huge man, with bulging cheeks, blows a monstrous clarionet. He wears the conical felt hat of the Dervish. Another wieldsda skin bassoon. There is a shrill violin, too, which screeches like a tortured animal. At intervals there is a clash and a rattle from three tambourines held high over the heads and fiercely shaken. The flute alone, plaintive and quavering, wails above the discord long sweet notes. These are ancient Kurdish instruments, extinct everywhere else, but lingering, like all old things, in the service of religion.

Down below on the shining parquet floor of the mosque the worshippers are preparing for the dance. This is the rode orf the Mevlevi (dancing) Dervishes,

A mere travesty of the service, maintained for the benefit of curious tourists, may be seen any day in Constantinople. The Mevlevi hold in common with the Rufá'i (howling) Dervishes the doctrines of the mystics as to the nature of God and His relations to men. Their rites aim at the creating of the ecstatic state. They put an esoteric interpretation on the Koran, and are not particular about the formalities of the mosque. In front of the *mihrab*, on a carpet, the sheikh or *pír* of the order sits cross-legged. "*Ashk olsun*" (Let it be love), he greets them, inclining his head to the Dervishes, who, about forty of them, squat in a circle around him. Solemnly and reverently they repeat together the *fátiha* or first Sura of the Koran. Then, rising, they stand erect with bowed heads to chant the creed of Islam. "*Lá iláha, illa 'llah*" (There is no God but God) they murmur, low and soft at first, but increasing imperceptibly, till a whole volume of sound, strong and loud, rises to meet the accompaniment of the wind instruments from the gallery. Still chanting, the dance begins. Robed each in the full garment, white and loose, of the dancing Dervish, the head crowned with the conical felt hat, the right arm extended above the shoulder, the left pointing downwards, each figure turns slowly and silently where he stands. Then, revolving ever more speedily, eyes fast closed and features rigid, he moves with endless convolutions round the room. This, the Dervishes hold, expresses the harmony of God's creation, in which they circle like the planets, detached from the world in an ecstasy

of spiritual love, of communion with the Eternal. Twirling, spinning, circling, circle within circle, eternally moving, the white ghost-figures flit in the dim light of the mosque below, elusive, ethereal. The chant is no longer low and monotonous, but rising with the increasing rapidity of the dance, deep-toned and loud, exulting. The aged sheikh, his figure swaying with measured movements, urges them on from the *mihrab*. The words of the chant are indistinguishable amid the clash of instruments, the whirr and the whish of whirling dancers. The women in the gallery are indifferent and uninterested, and the children enjoy themselves, all unconscious of the service below. But in spite of that, the mental atmosphere of the place is tense, full of emotion.

The faces of the men who watch it, as the faces of the dancers themselves, are strained, alert. Is it some Presence here, or at least the breath of some Presence passing over ? The whole scene is strangely moving, fraught with religious feeling. What, whence, are they, those dancing, tossing figures, impelled by what emotion ? All sense of their individuality is lost—are they creatures inspired, possessed ?

As I strain my eyes in the gloom to follow the convolutions of the dance, the age-long past that dancing has played in the history of religion unfolds itself to my mind. So inevitable and so irrepressible a thing is it that it has even grafted itself on to Islam, of all religious expressions the coldest and most formal. The alliance is unnatural and artificial. Far less incongruous is its survival in Christianity even. The

dance of Christian priests at Seville in Spain is more natural and explicable than the connection of dancing Dervishes with the service of Islam, and their enthusiastic chanting of its severe and simple creed. If the use of dancing in Islam is unnatural, its performance in the close and sultry atmosphere of the village mosque is so also. It is essentially a service of the open air. As one watches it, the incongruous surroundings fade away, the narrow whitewashed walls, the scrawled texts, the painted *mihrab*, and round the whirling worshippers the natural things which are their rightful background group themselves, the bare, wind-swept mountain spaces, the brown streams whispering and haunted, the rich fields ready for the sowing, the green pastures awaiting the generating touch of spring.

Whatever view is held of the priority of magic or religion in human development, dancing is one of those symbolic rites which is equally used in the service of either. It has its origin far back in that vague and shifting child-world, where thoughts and ideas are grouping themselves very gradually into definite forms and shapes. In the age when the magician and the priest divided equally among them the moral government of the world, dancing was already one of the rites which were claimed by either.

Dancing as a magic rite, pure and simple, is still practised in savage countries. In Madagascar, we are told, on the Gold Coast, and in West Africa generally, magical dances are regularly performed by the women in war-time. The idea is that if the dance is carried on lustily and unwearied, by the operation of

sympathetic magic, their husbands will not be surprised at night, or in any way caught unawares. Dancing is also a well-known vegetation charm. In ancient Mexico the women carried on solemn dances, and tossed their hair about in the wind, in order to produce long waving tassels for the maize. But it is unnecessary to go so far afield. In parts of Germany and Austria to-day the peasants believe that by dancing and jumping high in the fields they will make the flax grow to the same height. In East Prussia the girls dance in a hoop on the evening of Shrove Tuesday, in order to assist the fertility of the spring vegetation. In Sumatra winds are *danced for*. When friends are at sea, dances are performed to ensure a favourable breeze. Survivals of these magic dances are, of course, to be seen all over Europe and Western Asia at our Easter and Midsummer festivals. The dancing round the fires, so commonly observed on these occasions, must be traces of similar performances to promote vegetation. As we travelled over the great plateau of Konia to the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor, we were struck to see how intimate was the connection of the Mevlevi Dervishes with the tilling of the soil. The sacred *tekke* (college) of the order at Konia, the place of their origin and tomb of their founder, owns great tracts of land in the interior, and the Dervishes themselves do the whole work of cultivation. The brown-frocked figures were the only tillers of the soil we saw for several days. This system is entirely unconnected with *vakouf*, or the ownership of land, by the mosques and *medressehs*. May not the con-

nection of an order of sacred dancers with agricultural operations have its roots in some dim magical past, when the ceremony of dancing and the fertility of the earth were intimately connected in the mind of the people ?

When, in the slow process of mental development, religion gets the better of magic, supersedes and absorbs it—long though they may exist side by side —the priest puts a new meaning into the ceremonies and rites. Gradually and inevitably his meaning supersedes that of the magician. In the lowest strata of religious development, the dances performed round the open bier at funerals must be taken as belonging to religion, and not to magic. They seem to imply a service of propitiation or tendance of the spirit of the dead and, as such, they include the essential aspect of religion, that of communion with the spirit world. The same applies to the dancing of savages in animal-worship. In Sumatra dances are performed by one tribe at the death of a crocodile, obviously their original totem. When a tiger has to be slain, another of the tribes dances round its dead body. These ceremonies are no doubt held to propitiate the ghost of the dead animal. In a later stage of development, even in Rome in the days of the Empire, armed priests, called the *Salii*, carried on dances all round the walls of the city at the time of sowing and tilling the fields. Here we may see, in all probability, an unconscious fusion of two ideas. As a piece of sympathetic magic, the dancing was performed to assist the growth of vegetation. As a

religious ceremony it was doubtless intended for the "aversion" or riddance (Greek ἀποτροπή) of the spirits who might injure the crops. The religion here expressed is on a low level, but it is entirely distinct from magic. The magician is potent *in himself* to secure the prosperity of the crops. The priest or religious man can only seek to propitiate or avert the spirits, who, for good or evil, have the crops under their own control.

The practice of dancing as an expression of religious joy survived in Jewish customs. David danced before the ark as a service of thanksgiving to Jehovah. It has survived into the Christian Church itself. The priests who dance at Corpus Christi in the Cathedral of Seville are direct descendants of the savage dancers of primitive times.

But dancing is no mere expression of religious worship. It assumes a much higher aspect as one of the vehicles by which the highest religious emotion may be obtained. Whatever may be the connection—and it is only a remote one—between the dancing Dervishes and the dancing of David before the ark, or of Christian priests before the altar, the religious rites with which they most obviously share a common origin, are those of the mystics. The worship of Dionysus in Greece is, of course, the chief historical instance. In that worship the satyrs and mænads, bands of organised revellers who carried on his orgiastic rites in the mountains, performed the sacred dance in his honour. Homer speaks of the "fair dancing-grounds of Panopeus," and Pausanias, commenting

on the expression, explains how the bands of Attic and Delphian revellers, on their way to Parnassus, stopped to dance at Panopeus.

What was the idea at the back of these dances? They were no mere dances of joyfulness and thanksgiving. They were means to an end, and that end was the highest religious goal of the mystic, the state of ecstasy or freedom from self. In that state alone was the union with the god possible. And this was a real union, no merely metaphorical term to express deep devotion and submission. It was actual oneness, a union in which the worshipper and the worshipped, the priest and the god he served, became identified and one. This is the most daring of all religious beliefs. The whole spiritual nature in all its parts must respond to this highest of all demands. None but the most spiritually minded, none but those whose vision is purged of the blinding veil of self, can hope to attain to it. It is fraught with danger to all who cannot grasp the highest. It is open to the worst of all abuses, and he who stumbles at this doctrine falls lowest. But "the pure in heart shall see God," and so through all the ages there have been souls, stainless, elect, who, striving after this highest, have perhaps not hopelessly fallen short of the goal. But less lofty souls, the weaker, the lower, have thought by artificial means to induce that state of ecstasy and exaltation in which alone such union is possible. They have thought to attain by formal and mechanical means a condition which only strenuous moral endeavour and spiritual purity can produce. Solemn

dancing, the inhaling of mephitic vapours, intoxication with wine, the orgiastic revel, the vision of sacred objects as in the mysteries of Eleusis, the emotion called forth by gorgeous ritual, these all are regarded as inducive of the desired state of ecstasy. Such was the idea of the common people who joined in the worship of Dionysus. By orgiastic revels they believed they could actually identify themselves with the god. The very name of his worshippers denotes the idea. They are called *βάγχοι* (*Bacchoi*), named from the god himself. Taken out of themselves, as it were, by influences over which they had no control, freed, by whatever means it may be, from the fetters and the weighting trammels of self, their personality was effaced, and the divine breath, unchecked, was free to enter in and take possession. So at least it would seem to many, not only of the ignorant.

Whirr, whirr, whirr, goes the dance below, the white robes flutter, rustling, the tossing figures heave and whirl, the orchestra clashes, frenzied, savage, above the moaning chant. The service is drawing to a close. Spinning, twirling, ever revolving, each figure disappears one by one through a door at the side. The music ceases abruptly, and the voices of the children, shrill and unconcerned, are heard again. The women begin to wrap up the babies, for it is dark outside, and each mother disentangles her particular children from the party. There is a general clamour as they stumble and push and chatter down the stairs.

How comes it, I ask myself again, that this expression of religious mysticism has grafted itself on to Islam ?

The two are utterly incongruous and have no common ground. The crude and simple dogma of Islam, its severe and uncompromising creed, its belief in a Creator aloof from his creatures, how has this mystic religion of enthusiasm become its ally ? The alliance is unnatural and wholly incongruous. Yet the alliance is not inexplicable. For wherever there is a belief in God at all, there is a yearning for a closer and more intimate communion with Him. And wherever there is such yearning, there is the desire among the few, half fearful, yet greatly daring, for more than communion—for union itself. The desire is inevitable, irrepressible. The orthodox of Islam know it, and they have ceased to repudiate openly so universal a tendency of the human heart. They sanction it indeed, for is it not the Dervish whose aid is summoned at the really critical times of life ? It is he who goes forth with the armies of Islam to battle, and he who ministers to the dying with mystic consolation. In the rites of the dancing Dervishes we see the survival of this expression of a universal desire. Perhaps it is not merely a survival. Who shall say there is no genuine devotion, no real religious enthusiasm hidden under the coarse white robes of the Dervishes of to-day ?

X

A BLUE BEAD

YESTERDAY we left Aintab, a large city of Turks and Armenians, and to-night we camp at the village of Ural-keui, one of the last outposts of civilisation, on the road to Mesopotamia. There is an old American Mission in Aintab, one of the justly famous educational institutions which America has planted high and low, like beacon-lights, in the intellectual chaos of Turkey. The atmosphere within the mission-compound is thoroughly academic. It recalls the strenuous atmosphere of the rising universities in the north of England. There is a thirst for knowledge, a healthy intellectual rivalry among those thin, eager Armenian lads. The mental starvation of years is being satisfied at last. Within those walls it was hard to realise how sleepy and stagnant was the mental life of the Turkey outside. It was the West there, in the college at Aintab, the West with its keen life of competition and aspiration. This evening it is the East again. Nobody wants to read Shakespeare and Emerson out here. Life itself is riddle enough for these Turks.

We had ridden for five hours through an undulating fertile country, terraced with vineyards and olives. The soil about here is rich and red in places, and over

it the great fragrant branches of the olive trees, silver and shadowy, hang tremulous. But already at Ural-keui the air blows straight from the desert. One can scent the desert already, for its long bony arms are stretched over this fair rich country and they hold it in a vice. These spurs of broken rocky hills are the outposts of the desert. Behind us are the streams and the green growing things. Before us the desert stretches into space, interminable, empty. For weeks we shall wander in it. We shall never lose sight of it even when we travel along its cultivated fringes. Its breath is unmistakable to-night. Yet one day's journey, and then we cross Euphrates, its rightful boundary. True, in the north of Mesopotamia, attempts are made to cultivate the soil. Here and there among the waste of stones and mud there are patches of roughly ploughed land, which seem to mock at the desolation. Of all deserts this stony desert is the most pitiless, the most empty of romance. Mile after mile of black stones, grey-black with the scorching suns of summer, shining black with the muds of winter. The towns themselves are built of black stone, and the walls that surround them are of black basalt. It is a horrible country, God-forsaken, hated by men. It has none of the spacious majesty of the sandy desert, its changing lights, its great silences. For as the mules stumble over the stones of this desert, it rattles and clatters under them, and the wind and sleet lash the iron-bound rocks and make hideous merriment in the caves and the passes. It has a blight upon it, this land of stones ; a blight on its people too, for not a miserable

mud village upon it but is stained with blood and rapine, with the story of man's rivalry with nature in the work of destruction and shame.

But as we sit outside our camp at Ural-keui and the early autumn evening closes in, we are all unconscious of the bleak black land that lies before us. I picture to myself the desert of the Sunday picture-books, yellow, hot, spacious. Camels and palm trees, and deep wells with beautiful blue-robed Rebeccas drawing the water, make up the foreground, and in the distance are mountains like Sinai, flushed in a glory of sunset. The reality was very different, and I often sighed for Ural-keui and the bit of colour we saw there, the last time we were warm and dry, through that long cold winter in Mesopotamia. Ahead were the pitiless rattling stones, the freezing sleet, the crowded underground rooms where night by night the smoke from the fire of camel's dung blinded and choked us.

Hassan was depressed to-night. He had all the Osmanli's horror of the *chül* (desert), of any unknown, untried experience. His pleasures were simple. A little garden, some plots of flowering oleander, a shady tree—then a cup of coffee, and of course a cigarette. This was Hassan's *kayf* (pleasure), and he asked no more. To sit there, smoking and dozing all through the long afternoon, that was *rahat* (enjoyment, rest) indeed! If there was water there, a deep well, or, best of all, a running stream, Paradise itself could give no better. And in the *chül* there is no water at all. In some parts it must be carried in skins, and comes out thick and evil-smelling after the day's march.

"*Amán, amán!*" sighs Hassan, disconsolate. All day long, as we rode, he has done his best to persuade me to turn back. "Do not cross the river, Pasha—do not, Pasha." Again and again he has returned to the charge, till I got annoyed and bade him mention the subject no more. Poor Hassan, he is very calm and bold when dangers really come, but the prospect always unnerves him. I have seen the tears course down his cheeks when I put him into a through train from Cairo to Luxor. I was to meet him on the platform at the other end, but he had quite made up his mind we should never meet again. So Hassan's mind is filled with horrors unspeakable at the prospect of the *chŭl*. The talk in the camp has been all of its dangers and terrors for many a day. Above all, the anticipation of attack from the Hamidiyeh has been looming large in the minds of our escort. Under the lax and nominal command of famous Kurdish chiefs, they were at this time maintained with the twofold object of giving favour and independence to the Kurds, and of keeping in impotence and penury the Armenian population of the Asiatic provinces. The Hamidiyeh had other victims, moreover, than the Armenians. Their prey consisted of any passing caravan, and so aggressive had they become of late that for two years no caravan had crossed the roads we travelled to the Tigris. No wonder then that the name of Ibrahim Pasha, the Hamidiyeh chief, and of Mustafa, his famous fellow of Eastern Mesopotamia, recently killed, were on everybody's lips to-night, and that Hassan's heart was heavy within him. A *zaptieh* from the village

had been up in the camp to-night, and for long he and Hassan had squatted together, deep in consultation. Now their plans are laid, and Hassan comes slowly towards our tent.

We are sitting outside our camp in the sunshine this evening. A splendid stretch of cultivated land lies at our feet, the smoke of Ural-keui makes the air sweet and misty. Hassan hands each of us a cigarette and squats down beside us. He rolls cigarettes diligently this evening, and stops between each to mop his forehead. It is not really hot, so I know his *ján* (spirit) must be troubling him. When the perspiration streams down his face, and the pile of cigarettes at his side grows perceptibly, it means his *ján* is restless. "*Faide-siz dostoum*" (It's no use, friend) I cannot help laughing across to him. I imagined he was going to return to the charge of dissuading me from crossing the river—but no, he has given it up. "*Peki, Pasha,*" he replies, half laughing, half despairingly, "*peki, olur*" (Very well, it will have to be). But though he is beaten on the point, and he knows it, Hassan, after consultation with the *zaptieh,* has orders to deliver to-night. He knows they must be obeyed, and responsibility gives him courage. "Your *tabancha* (revolvers)—are they safe?" "Yes, at our belts." "From to-night on, *Effendiler,* you carry them loaded." This is good news. Life has been a little monotonous lately. There has been a sameness about the scenery, an absence of the spice of danger, without which Eastern travel must be incomplete. We load the revolvers then and there. "Remember," Hassan adds impressively, "by night

under your pillows, by day at your side—and loaded always. *Añlayor-mi-sin?*" (Do you understand?). He turns to me half angrily, questioning. "*Sahíh, sahíh, Effendim*" (Of course, of course) I assure him gravely—but yet he is not satisfied. What more is on his mind?

Twilight, the short, sad twilight of the East, falls on us, and Hassan goes to the other tent to fetch us our supper. We eat it where we are, in the open, and then Hassan brings us coffee and drinks with a heart-felt "*Inshallah*" to our safe pilgrimage to Baghdad. When Y. goes to bed, Hassan and I sit on in the darkness. No sound now but the wail of dogs from the village below, and the champing of the mules at their oats. The muleteers are silent and sleeping round their fire, pulling silently at the long hubble-bubble pipes and contemplating the morrow. Hassan looks round about him several times, uneasily, to make sure we are alone. Then he bends nearer to me. I feel a pity for this man for whom words are so difficult. So often the weight on his spirit is intolerable of anxiety, of perplexity, of regret, and he can find no relief in expression. Perhaps our friendship arose partly out of that fact. I was lips for him. I could say sometimes what he could find no words to say. Is that perhaps the ultimate function of West to East? Yet, alas! it is not the deepest thoughts of the East that the West can interpret. There is a barrier deep down. Beyond that the West cannot go.

Now as I watch Hassan in the dark, I can see, in the dim light, he is fumbling with the buttons of his shirt

at the neck. He throws it back, and then he tries to pull out something that is sewn fast to the inside. With clumsy fingers he pulls and pulls, then, as he cannot get what he wants, angrily he drags out his hunting-knife from the sheath, and cuts fiercely into the stuff. Never mind the hole in the well-worn shirt. He has got what he wants at last. He bends over me, and puts the object carefully between my fingers. It is a bead. Now I know what he wants to say. He is giving me his blue bead, his own blue bead. He has worn that bead for years, his mother stitched it first to his little baby shirt. It has guarded him all his life, the magic blue bead which averts the Evil Eye. He dives into his capacious belt, and produces a white thread. He has forgotten nothing. Then he slips the thread through the hole of the bead, and motions me, without a word, to loosen my dress at the throat. I obey, as I always obey Hassan, or nearly always. Carefully, with great solemnity, he ties it round my neck, securing the thread with two knots.

"You will wear this round your neck, Pasha—you will wear it always—you will be safe." "But what of you, Hassan?" "For me! What matter, Pasha?" and he laughs carelessly, happily. The bead is hung round my neck. Henceforth, as far as our part is concerned, we are secure. We have done our part. Hassan is greatly relieved. He had thought I might protest, laugh even. Once or twice in early days I had laughed, when the potency of beads and knotted strings and magic formulas was hidden from my mind. It is different now. Under the compelling influence of

this land of paradox and mystery, and of Hassan, its true expression, I know their value now. The loaded revolver itself has not the importance and the efficacy of the blue bead.

Hassan is very happy all the evening, and playful like a child. He pulls a pomegranate out of his pocket, and hands me the crimson pips. He breathes freely again. The tension is gone. And more than the fact that I wear the blue bead to him is the assurance in his mind that I see its importance, realise its uses. That is why he is so happy. The *chül* has lost its terrors.

XI

THE SHIAHS

For fifteen days we had floated down the Tigris. Our boat was a rough raft of wood, supported by inflated sheepskins, and our raftsmen (*kelekji*) were two Kurds, splendid and rather unruly savages from the mountains. We had come from far-off Diarbekr, city of black walls and frozen snows. Through the gorges of Kurdistan we had floated, not slowly there, but turbulently—a mad career—with shouts and prayers to Allah for protection from the spirits of the swirling deep, and terrific oaths that made the rocks re-echo. Over the rapids we had rushed, the raft staggering like a crazy thing, through high cliffs sprayed with leaping streams, and stained with mosses, pink and apricot. Then out into the open plain of old Assyria, past great green mounds as old as time, which bore illustrious names—Nineveh, Aasher, Nimrud. And so into the desert, wide-stretching, empty, the yellow desert of the picture-books, with palm trees and blue mirage.

To-night it is the genuine Eastern evening, hot and golden, and as we float round the bend of the river there is a typical Eastern city on the banks, golden-

domed and shaded with palms. A day or two before we had lost our only guide-book in a scuffle between the *kelekjis*, and we were completely ignorant of our whereabouts and of the city's name. But for Hassan, who knew less of the country than we did ourselves, none of our men could communicate with us or with him. Arabic and Kurdish were their tongues, and the names of places on their lips were too thick and guttural to be easily distinguished. So we had given up any attempt at acquiring information, and the river had become an ideal one to us, full of meaning and symbolism, but without much local significance.

"Here we shall tie up for the night, Effendim," remarks Hassan, pointing to the city that lay in the sunlight ahead. "One hour still before sunset," and he considers the heavens knowingly. "Of bread and dates we must lay in a store from the *charshi* (bazaar) here; of eggs and cheese we have sufficient." Hassan has taken charge of the larder on the raft, and it is in good hands. As we drift into the bank and tie up the raft to a great stone, we can contemplate the quarters we have chosen for the night.

The town stands about a quarter of a mile from the river. It is completely enclosed in a high wall of yellow brick—the sun-dried brick of ancient Babylon—and only the tufted heads of the palm trees are visible above it. Among them, copper-red in the evening light, is the dome of the mosque. No common mosque this. It is the first of its kind we have seen on this journey. It recalls Jerusalem, and the blue dome of

the mosque of Omar, in the glowing light it seems to hold within itself.

"*Mashallah! amma güzel dir*" (But it is beautiful) is Hassan's wondering comment. We step on shore, and leaving a *zaptieh* in charge of the raft, walk slowly up towards the town. The other *zaptieh* with his gun strolls lazily after us. Hassan goes on quickly ahead, for his purchases must be made before sunset, when the *charshi* will close. No one is about, but a handful of ragged little boys in once white shirts soon spring from nowhere, and gather round us. They follow us noisily, unusually inquisitive, it strikes us, for a town far away from the beaten track and the demoralising tourist.

Just outside the walls we are met by a whole crowd of people, men and children, who seem hurrying to meet us. This is so much the usual thing that we greet them with salaams and handfuls of sweets for the children. But this unfailing *entrée* to the hearts of the people seems to draw no response on this occasion. There are no smiling faces and kissing hands here. Even the children eye us suspiciously, and gabble to their fathers with great concern. The men have threatening looks for us. They push the children roughly aside, and gather together in groups, speaking to each other in low voices, hurriedly, with angry exclamations. The *zaptieh* looks nervous, and asks me helplessly where we shall meet Hassan. Unaware of all the cause of the clamour, and ignorant of our offence, we point again and again to the mosque. Can they not understand we only want to examine its beauties

from the outer court, and then to carry our purchases home from the *charshi*, and eat our supper on the raft ? But the more we point at the mosque, the more excited the crowd becomes. It is quite a big crowd now, and they are pressing rudely round us. They are hustling the frightened little *zaptieh*, pushing him about and shouting into his ear. In spite of his gun, he casts beseeching glances at me. "*Dûr, dûr!*" (Stop, stop) I cry sternly, but my Turkish falls on closed ears. Well, we will not be beaten. We are unaccustomed to bad manners in the East—we have been treated everywhere with courtesy, and such an exhibition only arouses our determination. We shall walk up the main street of the town and look at the mosque from without, and the people can spit and curse and push as much as they please.

A few yards from the outer gate of the mosque I turn and stop to look at the crowd. It is getting noisy, and I must see if anything in the angry faces can explain the tumult. The crowd stops too, and we confront each other. In one corner of it there is a strange hissing sound. Their teeth are set. Some boys, egged on by the men, are stooping to pick up stones, and one whizzes past my cheek. My dress is spattered with mud. When I see this I feel angry too. I handle my revolver deliberately, and look at the prominent men steadily. At this moment there is a low growl, as of an animal about to spring, and then with a scuffle and a rush a man pushes his way out of the mob, and stands over me. He is dressed in white, an *imam* (leading official) of the mosque, his forehead bound with

the *hajji's* (pilgrim's) green. The man is choking, incoherent with rage. There is nothing human in him. He is a wild animal, horrible, magnificent. I shrink from the beast, and that is his chance. He strikes me full-fisted across the shoulder, and I stagger to the ground. Then he stands over me, hideous, exulting.

It is only for a moment. Already the crowd is disturbed and frightened, and when I struggle to my feet and look round I see its balance is upset. They are all turning to look in one direction, and from that direction, down a side street leading from the *konak* to the mosque, a troop of soldiers is running. At their head is a mounted officer, and beside him, huge and terrible, is Hassan. He is running too, and beside him they all look small. In another moment the crowd is dispersing. The soldiers charge into the middle, knock down the children, hustle everybody, and surround us on every side. The captain on his horse plants himself beside me. The *imam* who struck me has disappeared. Hassan has fallen into the background. "*Irmagha*" (For the river!), orders the *Yuzbashi* (captain), and at a fast and steady march we set off back to the raft. It is a contrast this to our entry into the town, unthinking and at leisure. We go out of it in custody. "You have escaped with your lives, ladies," says the *Yuzbashi* in Turkish, as he kisses our hands on the river-bank. "Never come back again here." Untying the raft, the strong stroke of the paddle which bears us swiftly out into mid-stream, these are the work of a moment.

Whatever was it all about ? That was the question we asked each other, hopelessly mystified, as we floated on in the gathering grey of the evening. Why did the soldiers come all of a sudden ? Have we been dreaming ? So still and peaceful is the river, I am inclined to think so. But when Hassan has recovered himself a little, he tells us of his part in the matter. Sunni and Osmanli that he was, he very soon grasped, as he entered the town, that the crowd that followed him, vociferating and angry as ours had been, augured no good. Unable, just as we were, to speak to them or to understand their threats, he suspected, with the instincts of his race, that the trouble was a religious one. He perceived too that he, the Sunni, was as unwelcome here as we the Christians. There was no time to stop us. He knew we had started and must be close to the town now. He knew that trouble was brewing.

Vague and unpractical in everyday matters, Hassan rose in a crisis to promptest action. The white-washed *konak*, familiar sight all over the Empire, was easily seen. He made straight for it. A noisy crowd followed sullen at his heels, but the real fanatics among them lingered near the mosque. Once at the *konak*, he pushed his way, quick and unceremonious, to the colonel's room. There is trouble in the town. Two English women have entered, and their lives are threatened. There was no mistaking his report. In five minutes the little force was despatched. The town was in an uproar. The Vali himself was anxious. Injury to Europeans—whatever his ignorance, he

knew it never went unpunished. Every Eastern town is a barometer—trouble at one end is felt almost simultaneously at the other—and the disturbance at the *konak*, spreading like wildfire, had doubtless stayed a little the desperate atmosphere at the mosque. Hence Hassan's sudden and timely appearance at the head of a company of soldiers. Hence the dispersal of the mob, and our somewhat wonderful escape.

It was not till we got to Baghdad that we learnt from English sources the nature of the disturbance we had created. The town we had entered was Samarra, one of the most sacred of cities to the Shiah Mohammedans, to whom most of the cities on the Southern Tigris belong. The power and influence of the Shiahs lie in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates. It is the cradle of the faith to half the Mohammedan world. The whole of Persia, and countless thousands in India and Africa, look to it as the centre of the world. Under the religious ægis of that branch of Mohammedanism peoples of the most varying and incongruous beliefs and temperaments find a home. This is partly accounted for by its division into two powerful sects, with all the far-reaching developments of both, the *Imámiyeh* and the *Ismailiyeh*.

The doctrine of the *Imam*,* or the incarnation of God in successive human forms, can be developed into almost any extravagance of religious beliefs. It is

* The word has of course no connection with the *imam* often mentioned in this book, i.e. the leader of the services, or precentor in the mosque.

held with equal intensity of conviction by either division of the Shiahs, but whereas the *Imámiyeh* believe in the twelve official *Imams* and no others, the various sects of the *Ismailiyeh* only recognise the first seven of the official twelve, and hold that since their disappearance there have been and still will be occasional and successive incarnations. They are liable to occur at any time and in any place. They are independent of race, but not of course of religion. One of the last of the *Imams* was the Mahdi of the Soudan, and as such he inspired a fanaticism that was wholly misunderstood in the West.

The numerous sects, to whom this doctrine is the keystone and foundation of their religious systems, are of the most varied and opposed.

From the pure enlightened veneration of the Bâbis for the Bâb, to the fanatical devotion of African tribes to the Mahdi, all must be included as offshoots of the parent stock. Most of the early Mohammedan sects held this belief of divine incarnation in human form as their foundation, and it is one which is always most prolific of extravagant perversions, while it is the most tenacious and enduring of all bases of religion. In countries where this idea most readily appears, Shiism has most rapidly taken root and become the prevailing form of Mohammedanism. In India with its mystical atmosphere, and its million gods, this sect of Islam has won numberless adherents. The subtle Hindu with his metaphysical temperament would never be satisfied with the crude and final explanations

of orthodox Sunniism. He needs a form of religion as elastic as that which Shiism provides. The Persian finds the satisfaction of his sentimental and emotional nature in the sad story of the *Imams.* The distresses of Ali and his sons, the sufferings of the beloved Hussein, these are the pathetic figures on which he can lavish his emotions and bestow his sympathies. They are but the symbols of his own long sufferings under the cruel yoke of the foreigners. Shiism appeals to the Persian both in its human and its spiritual aspects. The most mystical of the Persian *Sufis* (mystics) can find food for his mysticism in the doctrine of the inward light which Allah implanted in the *Imams.*

Among the most ignorant and most downtrodden of subject peoples, it is only the abnormal forms of Shiah Mohammedanism which appeal. They find in its wide and elastic system traces of the older faiths that die hard, that will not be uprooted. They can put into it something of their own. No religious excrescence, whatever its practice or its philosophy, is disowned by Shiism. Even those who hold doctrines most alien to the real spirit of Islam and to all injunctions of the Prophet, can reconcile their doctrines or their customs with one or other of the widely differing and often inconsistent aspects of Shiism. Many who cannot even do this have taken the name of Islam, and so been nominally adopted into the great family. Even the despised Ansariyeh or Nusariyeh of the Syrian mountains, and the Kizil-bashes (red-heads) with their strange mixture of Paganism and

Christianity, profess their adherence to some form of the Shiah faith, and though the still more suspected Yezeedis and Sabæans of Mesopotamia do not adopt the actual name, it has not been the Shiahs who have molested them and destroyed their sanctuaries, and it is not the Shiahs whom they detest and fear. It is the orthodox Sunniism that leaves them no security or peace. It is its levelling hand, wherever it has pressed, that has crushed them. True, the Druses of the Lebanon, who acted as a pawn in the political game of Turkey, were allowed to exist unmolested, and the Bâbis, exiles from rival countries, have found a harbour within the Empire. But in these cases Turkey was only consulting her own interests. The little despised sects, the strange old religious survivals of which Mesopotamia is the hotbed, where do they exist within the stifling mental atmosphere of orthodox Islam? The traces of them are rare, and difficult to discover. Their rites are performed in secret, and they will not disclose their doctrines, least of all to a Sunni.

But in regular and organised Shiism, orthodoxy has met its match. With the irony of history, the birthplace of Shiah Mohammedanism, the lower waters of the Tigris and Euphrates, is within the domain of its bitterest foe, the Sultan of Turkey, recognised head of orthodox Islam, the Khalif of God on earth. This is the cradle of the faith. Meshed-Ali, Nedjef, Kerbela, sacred cities of the *Imams*—are all within the enemy's territory. To half the Mohammedan world, these are places of pilgrimage as sacred as Mecca itself. Here,

into the land of the orthodox, come year by year countless thousands of the bitterest foes of orthodoxy. India, Persia, Africa, the far islands of the Indian Seas, they send their quota of pilgrims to the sacred cities. They bring their gold and silver to offer to the shrines, they bring—more precious burden still—the bodies of the dead to bury in the precincts. In those sacred cities the Sunnis, dominant elsewhere, are foreigners and strangers. They enter them at peril of their lives. Tolerant to a certain limit as are these Shiahs, beyond that limit they are intolerance and fanaticism itself. They draw the line at a Sunni. The sacred places of Christendom are in the domain of the enemy too, but with this difference in the position. Whereas at Kerbela, both Christian and Sunni Mohammedan, the traditional enemy, are forbidden the city, much more the tomb of Hussein itself, in Jerusalem the Sunni himself keeps watch over the tomb of Jesus. He even intrudes upon the baby memories of Bethlehem.

The Shiahs hate the Christian, but they hate the Sunni still more. He represents to them all the religious domination and the political bondage they detest. If by chance a Sunni enters one of the sacred cities, he is looked on as taboo. He is given no shelter, and he may buy no food. He is regarded as a leper, unclean.

Now as we floated, all ignorant of our whereabouts, down the sleepy waters of the Tigris, we had landed quite unconsciously at one of the sacred cities of the Shiahs. The city of Samarra is sacred to the twelfth

Imam, Mohammed-Mahdi. Here, under the mosque, is the *serdáb* (underground room) in which he mysteriously disappeared. He is to come again with Christ at the end of the world.

The reverence and worship of Shiahs for the *Imams* is the keystone of their religious system. At Samarra the spot from which the last of the *Imams* vanished is treated as of peculiar sanctity. That was the golden dome that glowed in the sunset as we floated to the city. That was the mosque we had intended, in our ignorance, to examine. We had been guilty of sacrilege.

Our experience at Samarra, and again our visit to Kerbela, where the tomb of *Imam* Hussein has made the city consecrate, taught us to understand something of the intolerable awe with which the *Imams* are regarded. We realised then the enormity of our offence. No Christian of the twelfth century held the Mohammedan rulers of Jerusalem in greater horror and repulsion than the Shiahs of the Holy Places hold Christians and Sunnis alike. Christianity has long ceased to hate its religious enemies in any active manner. Perhaps the reverence of Christians for their Christ has become more spiritual, and is concerned less with the sanctity of localities and sites. The holy places of Christendom have been held for centuries by Moslem rulers. The Turk with his hubble-bubble keeps watch over the Sacred Tomb.

To the Mohammedan, whether orthodox or heretic, such desecration would be impossible, even if it concerned only a mosque without historical associations,

To the Shiah, the entrance of a Christian, even more of an orthodox Sunni, into his sanctuary, savours of profanity. But where the tomb of an *Imam* is concerned, or any spot which is sacred to an *Imam*, it is absolutely forbidden. To intrude into the sacred Kaaba of Mecca itself would be no greater risk to the Christian, than for a Sunni to enter the tomb at Kerbela.

This was the root of all the uproar at Samarra. The British Embassy at Constantinople might consider itself fortunate that no complications ensued. The appearance of Hassan the Sunni in the town, recognised at once by his dress and his speech, had been sufficient to arouse the suspicions of the people, and to inflame them against the Christians who followed him. For the Sunni himself it was equally contamination. I never alluded to the incident without a shiver of disgust from Hassan. "*Domuz!*" (Pigs) he would utter under his breath, his voice thick with contempt and loathing.

How then is it possible to account for this bitter and apparently unreasoning hatred that exists between the two divisions of Islam? The historian will account for the fact by referring back to the political quarrel of 1200 years ago. The whole quarrel arose over the dispute that followed the death of Mohammed. Who was his rightful successor? One party, and the strongest, proclaimed the three disciples of the Prophet, Omar, Othman, and Abu Bekir. The other party followed the leadership of Ali, his son-in-law, and maintained that the Khalifate resided henceforth in

his family. His sons, Hassan and Hussein, and their descendants were the rightful inheritors. But the dispute over the question of the Khalifate, though it accounted for the division into two rival camps, was certainly not sufficiently fundamental to explain the bitterness, the repulsion, the detestation, that for 1200 years one division has felt for the other.

It is only when we regard the trivial political quarrel of the eighth century as representative of a much deeper and more fundamental antagonism that we understand its significance. That antagonism is at bottom between two races. Practically, for many centuries, it was concentrated and limited to a struggle between two nations, the Arab and the Persian. But these nations represent two races, two world-forces radically opposed to each other, at heart incompatible, the Semite and the Aryan. Had the two races been more alike in temperament, had their outlook on life more nearly converged, the cleavage might have been less wide. But the racial differences only emphasised the differences of temperament. The religious points at issue between the two sects are only the stammering expression of this difference.

In Shiah Mohammedanism the Aryan consciousness finds its natural religious expression. The Shiah doctrine of the *Imam* and all it implies, this is but the crude and awkward embodiment of a fundamental attitude, intellectual and spiritual. Others of their doctrines—the esoteric interpretation of the Koran, the symbolic character of outward ceremonial, for instance—are equally characteristic. The temperament,

the moral complexion, of the Persian forbids his submission to any binding external authority, Koran or *Sunnat* (tradition). His tendency to mysticism, to metaphor in expression, makes a literal interpretation of the sacred books impossible to him. The reality of abstract things is vivid to him, makes a constant demand on his consciousness. His attitude to religious truth is subjective, individual. There is no supreme spiritual authority outside of himself, his own conscience.

Man, he says, is one, body, soul, and spirit. No one part of him, intellect, reason, for instance, can lay claim to be sole vehicle of spiritual truth. Emotion, practical experience, the senses, all have their part to play, their message to give. God uses each, reveals Himself through each.

The revelation of God in a book is necessarily, therefore, inadequate, too one-sided, too limited. Neither Bible nor Koran can stand the test demanded.

Hence the doctrine of the *Imam*, the incarnation of the divine in human form. God must become man, must walk the earth as man with men. Only so could every subtle part of man's personality find Him, reveal Him forth. The appearance of the *Imams* supplied the need. The possibility of their reappearance, the fact that in quite recent times they have appeared, in Africa, in India, in Persia, is enough to keep the great Shiah sect of Islam spiritually alive, alert, self-conscious. The Khalifa of the Soudan, the Bâb of Persia, the "mad Mollahs," they owe their

accorded sanctity, their amazing political triumphs, to this wide-embracing Shiah belief.

Man has verily made God in his own image. The God of the Aryan is only the magnified Aryan himself.

It is perhaps not wholly irrelevant to consider here the position of the Shiah in comparison with the Christian. Is there not in this great section of Islam the possibility, even the promise, of a closer, a more natural understanding with Christianity than can ever be possible in orthodox Islam? Certain fundamental ideas, not in origin incompatible, are held by both. Both believe in the necessity of a human incarnation. Both regard the man-God as the one authority binding on men's consciences. Both believe in the possibility through him of union between man and God. The persons of Hussein and of Christ are surely suggestive of common elements. May they be regarded as suggestive too of some possibility of religious approach in the future?

When we turn to orthodox Islam, to Sunniism, we find the same thing that impressed us in the Shiahs. The peculiarities of racial temperament are expressed in religious belief. Sunniism as a religious system is one inevitable expression of the Semitic consciousness. The Semite, be he son of Jacob or of Esau, is always an entity, self-contained, aloof, apart, among the nations of the world. His outlook on life is limited, his attitude to life essentially moral. There is an intolerance, an exclusiveness about him, an incapacity to grasp any point of view but his own. Yet the very

intolerance implies a robustness, a sternness of moral character which the mere mystical, emotional races of the world are lacking in—and as is the race and its qualities, so is the race's God. The Semite, like the Aryan, has made God in his own image. The Jehovah of the Hebrews, the Allah of the Moslems, each of them is the glorified desert sheikh, idealised of course, but essentially the same. It is the highest they know, the ideal of what man should be, therefore it is what God should be. Stern, unbending, yet capricious and childish in mood is this God, as little to be reckoned upon as the sudden winds which spring up in the desert, or the green of an oasis in a waste of yellow sand.

"There is no God but God," cries the *muezzin* from the minaret, and that God is the Allah of the Moslem. "There is no God but our God," cries the Jew in his Scriptures, and that God is Jehovah, the tribal warrior-God, who fought with the Amalekite and the Philistine. Self-contained, limited in power they both are, but strong in moral fibre, emphasising in all the world of spiritual things the dependence of the spiritual on the moral, the eternal union between God and the Good.

True it is that the Semite has not always been satisfied with the God he has made. In every age of the world there are souls who seek for a higher conception, for a wider ideal, than that which time or place can give. The Semite has had his glimpses of the larger ideal. He has had his Job, his Isaiah. A God who was limited by no home, no place, no race, this had

dawned on his consciousness indeed. But a God whose operations concerned a sphere outside man and his horizon altogether, the God of a cosmic order independent of human life and human endeavour, the God of the animal creation, of the world of the beautiful, the sublime, the God of other worlds beyond this universe of which man can have no token, this he had not conceived. The vision had dawned perhaps for Isaiah, but far off, dim, to his fellows inexpressible. A new religion was needed to embrace this larger idea, this more divine conception—and so out of Judaism Christianity arose. Undeveloped, ungrown as Christianity still is after all these ages, it has in it the germs of the highest, the possibility of a bolder grasp of the Infinite than any religious system has yet attained.

To come back to the Shiah. We have regarded Shiism as the religious expression of racial characteristics. Is it allowable to look at it from another, a more spiritual point of view? Whatever its weakness, its inadequacy, its disproportions, is it not true that in the religious sense it grew out of primitive Islam? Is it not from this particular standpoint one step higher in the religious order of the world—an attempt, however feeble, to express a truer, a more adequate view of God? In any case it has grasped one truth, a truth without which God can never be approached, the truth that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," the truth that it is by no slavish submission to any external authority that knowledge of God is attained. It has never aspired to the purity

and the majestic universalism of Christianity indeed, but stammering and rude, it has tried here and there, now in this age, now in another, some of the ideas on which Christianity rests. It is as the Christian religion is to the Jewish, the spiritual side of Islam, the attempt to reach the higher truths which only inward illumination can give.

We have regarded the mutual antagonism of Sunni and Shiah as a quarrel fundamentally racial. But this racial quarrel has been focussed and concentrated into a national one. The Semitic was the Arab, the Aryan was the Persian, and through all the Middle Ages these nations were rivals, for religion, for territory, for political predominance.

More than any Eastern nation, except perhaps Japan, which is more geographically separate, the Persian has fostered through the centuries his national consciousness. The descendant of long lines of illustrious kings, he resented the domination of the Arab, upstart as he was, in the eighth century. He has resented it ever since. The Arab represents to him all the hard and binding lordship he detests. Politically, the Persian was for centuries the subject people. The Arab was his master. Rude, insolent, physically robust, he stamped upon all that the Persian held dear in the national life. And in the sphere of religion, the Arab, orthodox, a Sunni, sought to impose his heavy yoke on the heretic Persian. The Persian revolted against the yoke. He would not endure the binding legal commands and prohibitions, the ultimate authority of the Koran, the hard and fast doctrines

to which his intellect must submit. Subjugation in politics or in religion, this he would unfalteringly resist. And so the Sunni has always been his enemy. All that he revolts against, all that offends his pride, all that he most bitterly resents, is typified in him.

XII

THE SACRED FISH

In the ancient city of Edessa, the traditional Ur of the Chaldeans, you are shown the simple home of the child Abraham. There in the rock, under the famous mosque, is the cave of the Nativity, the kitchen table, even the little wooden cradle suspended under the roof. Pilgrims from all over the Moslem world come here to pay homage to one of the greatest of the Prophets. Mohammed has no Bethlehem, but all men want a cradle to kneel at. Christians, Jews, and Moslems, we can all meet here in sympathy, and our own party is representative of the races and religions, widely differing, who reverence Sheikh Ibrahim, the Friend of God. We are a mixed party, English travellers, missionaries from America, the Armenian pastor of Urfa (Edessa), Moslem notables, an old Jew trader whom the Government has sent as guide. The Mohammedans guard the holy cave as jealously, and much more effectually, than the monks of Bethlehem guard theirs.

Outside the mosque, and within its peaceful white courts, is a large oblong tank of water. Its waters in the distance are shimmering and oily. Coming nearer, we see that the effect is caused by fishes just

"THE CHILD ABRAHAM ONCE FISHED FOR THEM IN THE TANK"

below the surface of the water, innumerable fishes, the fins and backs of which are so closely wedged together that they make an almost solid layer of silvery life.

The guardian of the mosque, an old white-haired *mollah*, throws some meal into the water, and the fish jump high to catch it, a great living pyramid, of which those who jump the highest form the pinnacle.

"What a horrid sight!" I remark to Hassan under my breath, but he, fearing I shall be overheard, anxious to shield me, carries on a vigorous conversation with the *mollah*. He asks him a string of conventional questions about the fish. Pushing his way to the front of the party, the *mollah* informs us what it is that makes the tank so famous. Here the young Ibrahim used to fish as a child. The fish being in consequence sacred, no single one has ever been caught or killed to this day. Indeed, death would overtake the man who transgressed this law. The good man is completely satisfied with the explanation and with the increased sanctity acquired through Abraham. So are most of the party who listen to it.

It was a curious instance, though a common one, of the way the primitive old ideas adapt themselves to the new incoming religion. Abraham, the new-comer who represented the new God, has had no rival for the old shrine of Urfa. He has remained supreme there for at least three thousand years. But longer ago than Abraham and Jehovah, another God was worshipped there. Him Abraham has superseded, but not destroyed. That was the Fish-God. The tank of Urfa is,

of course, far older than the mosque which marks the traditional birthplace of Abraham, far older, too, than the worship of Abraham's God. True it may have been that to the highest form of the Fish-God, Dagon himself, the form developed by organised polytheism, young Abraham himself did homage. The age of Abraham was far advanced beyond the stage of mere totemism. The Fish-God had become a man with a fish's tail, but his origin was clear, and he still held firm hold of the city.

From the bands of animal worship, then, Abraham arose to seek a more human God elsewhere, more human, and therefore more spiritual. And then, when the city became sacred to the great Semitic hero, he imposed his reputation and his sanctity on the disinherited Fish-God. He took over his sacred tank. Henceforth the fish have no sanctity apart from Abraham, no one must kill one under penalty of death —but that is only because the child Abraham once fished for them in the tank.

When a sacred tree passed into the custody of a new religion, a holy man must die beside it, and a *weli* (shrine) be reared under its branches. This will give it an air of respectability. When a sacred cavern, one of the high places of the pagan Canaanites, must be somehow connected with a Christian Saint, St. George perhaps will take it over ; later on a Moslem hero will supersede him again. The passing of one full-bloom god into another is familiar. The Anatolian Divine Mother becomes the " Mother of the gods " ; the dead Adonis, the dead Jesus ; the god Hermes, the Good

Shepherd. A transition which requires a more ingenious explanation is that from the animal or vegetable god into the incoming hero or deity, and the subjection of the animal or vegetable to a mere accessory of the new-comer. So Athene has her owl, Apollo his mouse.

"Do you believe that, Hassan, about the fish?" I ask as we walk on together round the town.

"*Bilmemki, Effendim,*" he answers, puzzled—"but *Hazret Isa* (the Lord Jesus) went fishing—perhaps *Hazret Ibrahim* (the Lord Abraham) was fond of it too. *Allah biliyor*" (Allah knows).

XIII

THE GREAT ASSYRIAN PLAIN

Mossul, the half-way halting-place for rafts on the Tigris, stands opposite the famous mound of Koyundjik, the ancient Nineveh. For some miles above Mossul the river is wide and slow, and for many hours we had seen the broad green hill in the distance that marked our goal. The rafts made in Diarbekr cannot be taken further than this. New and larger ones must be built for the wide shallow stretches to Baghdad, and a halt of two or three days at Mossul is a necessity. The old raft is broken up here, and the skins are carried back to Diarbekr over the mountains.

For a day or two before we reached Mossul we had entered the country of the famous Shammar, the most important perhaps of all the Bedawin tribes. With the Anazeh, whose head-quarters are on the Euphrates, they divide central Mesopotamia between them. The relations of these two tribes and their joint relations to the Turkish Government constitute the serious politics of Mesopotamia. An age-long feud has divided the Shammar and the Anazeh. They are the only regularly fighting tribes. Every spring they meet in

conflict on the best pasture lands of Mesopotamia, and in old days they held the country without a rival. The Turk, until twenty years ago, was a negligible quantity. But within the last few years Turkish rule in Arabia has become much more of a reality. As the power of Turkey wanes in the West, there is no doubt it increases in the East and South. In the days of Layard the Arabs terrorised the few Turkish officials sent to keep order among them, and the country was a prey to the depredations of the Bedawin. To-day the Turk is quietly but surely wresting the power from the hands of the Arabs, and is fast making himself master of the country. A solitary Turkish guardhouse marks every few miles of all the long desert route from Baghdad to Damascus, and during three months in Turkish Arabia not a *sou* of blackmail was demanded of us, and the country, as far as travellers were concerned, was very generally secure. One or two *zaptiehs* at the most were given us, while further north we could hardly escape with less than £5 for our escort. To-day Turkish troops quell Arab disturbances promptly, where twenty years ago a casual traveller need not have guessed the country was under Turkish rule at all. It was far otherwise in the Kurdish-Armenian country we had passed through in the North. There Turkish officials, so far as the Kurds were concerned, were at a discount. The Hamidiyeh Cavalry, i.e. Kurdish sheikhs, armed by the Sultan, were the real rulers of Northern Mesopotamia, and it required inordinate *baksheesh*, and days of bribery and persuasion, to muster a caravan between Urfa and Diarbekr,

Mossul is only on the borderland between Kurdish and Arabic country, but every day as we neared Baghdad there was less necessity for escort and arms. The Arabs of Mossul are of the most debased city type. They are like the Bedawin in appearance, except for the bright silk *'anteri* (gown) under their dark *'abás*, and the scarlet or yellow top-boots. As we moored the raft to the landing-place, a long row of them, seated on their haunches on the bank, surveyed us with a hard and stupid stare. They suggested a slave-market somewhere in the vicinity. On the opposite bank, where the mound of Nineveh overlooks the town, the shore was white for two hundred yards with cotton clothes. It was washing-day, and the women of Mossul were busy with their beating and scrubbing on the flat stones at the river's edge. Among the stolid Arabs with their *narghilehs* (water-pipes) and *kurbashes* (whips) swarms of half-naked children played and tumbled about in the mud, boys in white cotton caps, or bareheaded with shaven heads, and plump baby girls in torn shirts, with chains of beads and old coins for charms round their necks, and tiny leather packets with words from the Koran hung to a short string. They were unattractive, bad-mannered creatures, far different from the graceful Bedawin children of the desert, or the agile youths of Armenia. Ragged Turkish soldiers mingled with the crowd, arguing angrily with the men, or lashing out among the children with a *kurbash* when the importunate swarms threatened to impede our progress. Strings of laden mules and camels came down to the river-side to unload and

water, and one shivered as one by one the galling pack-saddles were removed, and the half-raw backs exposed to the light. The vendors of sweetmeats and cool drinks settled themselves alongside the raft. The beggars, the halt, the maimed, and the blind, came groaning and wailing to the water's edge and were pushed back again with curses by the *zaptiehs*. Sticky handfuls of dates were held out for sale from all sides, a sight to grow intolerably familiar before the desert was crossed. The boys and women, holding up loud-cackling hens by the legs, were ubiquitous here as elsewhere, and the hens if possible skinnier. The sun blazed up above, and the gaudy, dirty East flaunted itself in its crudest aspect. There are days when the East is mean and repulsive, when its pitiable contrasts, its dirt, its callousness, its lack of sentiment, oppress and appal.

From the dirt and the squalor of Mossul we rode across the great Assyrian plain to Khorsabad, the city of Sargon. The real Assyria lies between the Tigris and the great Zab, its largest tributary on the left bank, and the plain is dotted here and there to-day with the *tels*, or mounds, which mark the site of its ancient cities. First and largest of these is Koyundjik, the green mound of Nineveh, which fronts Mossul on the opposite bank. Crossing the Tigris by a crazy bridge of boats we rode up its sloping sides to get the view from the summit. The old walls of Nineveh extend for two and a half miles along the bank of the river. They are marked by long mounds forty to fifty feet high, stretching into the plain behind, the two great

tels of Koyundjik and Nebi Yunas standing on the river at the north and south. An elaborate system of moats and earthworks defended the city on the land side. On the top of the mound still gape the black mouths of the shafts, whence Layard and Rassam drew their famous treasures. Here stood the palaces of Assurbanipal and the great Sennacherib, and here were found the deluge tablets, one of the chief possessions of the British Museum.

A ride of four hours over the flat plain, where cultivation by primitive ploughs was going on and the cotton harvest was gathering, brought us to Khorsabad (Dur-Sargoni). The mound is smaller than Koyundjik, and at its foot stands a little collection of mud huts which constitute an Arab farm. A French expedition under M. Botta excavated Dur-Sargoni, and its spoils are now in the Louvre. The city was founded by Sargoni about 720 B.C. The young grass of winter covered the mound, and a few autumn crocuses still held up their pale heads in the evening sunshine. The sun was hot, though the mountains of Kurdistan, which flank the plain to the east, were spotlessly white in their winter snows. At our feet, as we rested on the side of the green *tel*, stretched as far as the eye could reach the ancient plain of Assyria. Here and there, dotted over the great expanse, were the mounds of fallen cities—Nineveh, chief of them all, backed by the tall minarets of Mossul—Nebi Yunas to the south, marked by the white mosque of Jonah. Here, according to tradition, went forth the prophet to thunder his woes against Nineveh. Further

south still stands Birs-Nimrud, the old tower of Caleb, where the city of Shalmaneser I was brought to light, founded as far back as 1300 B.C. Yet even this is modern compared to primeval Asshur (Kala'at Sherghat), sixty miles to the south of Mossul, where the earliest offshoot from the first empire of Babylon settled long ages ago. The sun is setting over the low hills of Mesopotamia, and a glimpse of the Tigris to the north is red through the evening mists that hover above it. The flocks are being folded for the night, some in solitary sheepfolds in the open, some in the mud farms near the *tels*. The tall Arab shepherds move, calling among the flocks, the noisy sheep-dogs race hither and thither at their word. The girls in their dark blue robes at the wells make ready for the evening watering, and camels and mules are led out in long strings. It is a peaceful pastoral scene. The sky overhead, a stainless turquoise blue, begins to darken, and under the sunset over Nineveh a solitary planet glows steadily. Behind, the snowfields on the heights still flush rose-red in the reflected glory. A great hush falls now on the plains below. The voices from the farms are far away and subdued, the flocks are folded. Under the stars the snows are fading to coldest green. A jackal creeps across the hill-side, and the crocuses have gone to sleep.

Hassan has ceased to smoke. He is staring at the dimness of the plain before him. "Pasha Effendi; listen," he says at length, and his voice is low, "the giants (*deftler*) made this." He points to the *tel* behind him. "No, Hassan, a great king," I reply. "A

great king," he repeats slowly, "a great *Padishah*." And then, troubled, he turns to me. "What was the use of it, *dostoum* (my friend)?" he asks. "*Nefaide?*" (What is the good?). Hassan shivers. "It is all gone. *Faidé vármi?*" (Is there any good?) he asks again. I do not answer. Hassan shrugs his shoulders.

The farm in which we slept that night consisted of a square courtyard enclosed with mud walls. In the middle was a well, and a flour mill. On three sides of the square were roofed-in stables and living-rooms, on the fourth was the door and an open shed; of the two living-rooms, one belonged to the farmer's family, a crowd of women and children, the other was used to store the cotton-heads which the women prepared for market. The servants and retainers sleep here also, and a few undesirably dirty *yorghans* (padded quilts) were strewn about. The farmer, a huge Arab, only recently taking to a little primitive agriculture, received us with a courtesy and a gentleness that was particularly grateful after the manners of Mossul. He sat beside us on the mud seat along the farm wall all through the dark evening, and discussed many things through our *zaptiehs*' interpretation. Round him squatted his men relations, brothers, uncles, sons, and nephews, and his Yezeedi servants or slaves from the mountains. The Yezeedis are in great demand as servants in the plain, for they cost next to nothing to keep, and the question of wages admits of an elastic treatment. The Yezeedis with their long pigtails have degenerated into a stupid-looking people, but perhaps

we need not lay this sin to their own door. The men smoke in motionless silence around us, the little boys chatter together.

Before turning into the barn to sleep I visited the family living-room. It is a stuffy dark room with no windows, and the only ventilation comes through the ill-fitting door, and the chimney-hole in the mud roof. A dingy oil lamp hangs in the corner, and lights up a wide divan which serves as the family bed. Under a threadbare red quilt (*yorghan*) a mother with a baby two days old lies sleeping. The old hag who has made herself mistress of the household lifts the tiny rigid thing up for my inspection, and shows me how dexterously she has bound on the swaddling clothes. The baby's small head is weighted with a heavy cap, from which a string of charms, old coins, cylinders, blue beads and pieces of bone hang round its neck for luck, and jingle when it is lifted. On the same divan three other babies of various sizes in dirty cotton shirts play about unheeded, and on the floor two small boys are eating some leathery bread for their supper. The mother wakes up while the baby is inspected, and holds my hands in hers when I give it her back. She has tiny hands, like many desert women, and dreamy grey eyes with long black lashes. The old hag is cooking the men's supper, a huge cauldron of steaming rice and goat's flesh. In the other corner a splendidly attired girl sits motionless and incongruous, her head adorned with a weighty turbaned erection and her breast glittering with barbaric beads and stones. She does not rise to greet me, and she takes no part in the work

of the house. This is of course a bride. She was married three days ago to the farmer's brother, but until to-night she must not take off her wedding finery, or speak or move at will. She is terribly weary of the long ordeal. If she were not so disfigured with paint she would be pretty, and this I try to explain to the other women. But our intercourse is limited, for no *zaptieh* may interpret in the harem. At this point a stern knock at the door summons me to the barn. "*Gel, Pasha,*" (Come, Pasha) I hear Hassan's peremptory voice; "*guech dir*" (It is late).

We spread our *yorghans* on the floor of the barn that night and made ourselves rather spiky pillows of the cotton-heads. It is bitterly cold, and we lie under our heaps of sheepskins and shiver, though Hassan sits up all night and tends the *mangal* (brazier). The farm at Dur-Sargoni is the dirtiest we have slept in, and the cold is not our only enemy on the mud floor. Hassan sits cross-legged against the wall, and smokes endless cigarettes. In the middle of the night he makes himself a cup of tea. He sees that I am awake, and we share it together. He rearranges my sheepskins, takes off his own coat, and puts it over my feet. He opens the door for a moment, and the thick pale mist of early dawn comes in damply. "*Geliyor, dostoum,*" (It is coming, friend) he says softly, not to wake Y. Hassan never uses a word too much. "It" means the sunrise in this case.

XIV

A WEDDING CEREMONY

EARLY in our journey we spent a few days in Eskishehr. An invitation to a Turkish wedding was a welcome variety to our rather monotonous walks in the bazaars and rides in the dusty country round. We understood very little Turkish in those days, so a young Greek lady, the daughter of the landlord of the little hotel, offered to accompany us and interpret our conversation into French. Like most guides she could tell us a great deal about what was quite obvious, but nothing at all about what we wanted to know. The wedding was like all Eastern weddings among the poorer classes. We joined the ladies' party towards evening, and sat with the bride and her ladies in the bridegroom's house, whither she had been brought with music and singing earlier in the day. Her future mother-in-law, the mistress of the ceremonies, bustled busily around, entertaining us all as we sat on the floor with abundance of jokes and cigarettes. After an endless wait, a stodgy *bourgeois* supper was produced, and at a low round table on the floor we sat cross-legged to partake of it. It was piled high with flat layers of bread, dishes of tough cold chicken and goat's meat, and we helped

ourselves with our fingers. We used a flap of bread for a plate, and another for a napkin. The bride sat all the time in the corner of the room on the solitary chair the house possessed. She was not allowed to eat with us, nor to raise her eyes from the ground. "She ought to be ashamed," was her mother-in-law's feeble explanation, when I asked the reason of this prohibition. She was covered from head to foot with an enormous veil of violet gauze, and her face beneath was adorned with pieces of gold paper pasted on with white of egg. She was only fifteen, a big, awkward girl, and the surreptitious glances she occasionally cast at the feast revealed a pair of very hungry eyes.

After supper we were all turned out of the living-room, and had to jostle and crowd on the landing outside as best we could, for the principal room had to be prepared for the ceremony, and the bridegroom would not tarry much longer.

The bride had just been left alone on her chair in the corner, when a strident band and the noise of merry-making in the streets below were heard, and from the open window we could see the flaming torches of the bridegroom's procession, turning the corner from the open space of the *meydán* (market-place).

It was a wild and romantic scene, the women on the balcony craning their heads and waving their arms in welcome, against the starlit skies, the dumb bride with her downcast eyes under the flickering oil lamp inside, the noisy shouting procession in the street. It stops at the door, and from the sedan-chair, in which he is carried, the bridegroom dismounts and

knocks at the door of his own home. His father, who stands at the bottom of the stairs, admits him. Formally they mount together to the landing, where the chattering women, the aunts and sisters and grandmothers, huddle back together against the wall to make room for the principal actor in the ceremony.

The door of the bridal chamber was closed. Within waited the bride, veiled and ready to receive her lord. The bridegroom's mother stood at the door outside to admit her son. A shy and sheepish youth, he was very self-conscious in his gaudy new clothes, his silk '*anteri* (coat), and scarlet sash. He paused a moment when he reached his mother—he had learned his part—and then, in full view of everybody, his mother grasped him by the shoulders and gave him a sound shaking. It was evidently part of the formal proceedings, for he did not seem at all surprised, though he was certainly a little breathless when his mother flung wide the door and pushed him within. The women retired into other rooms to discuss the appearance and deportment of the happy pair, and to gossip with the imposing mother-in-law on the prospects of domestic help which she intended the marriage to bring to her personally. It was the only aspect of the wedding which appealed to her. We made our salaams and disappeared from the crowd into the silent streets.

That little scene of the shaking had arrested my attention. Whether or not it was a universal custom in Turkey I do not know, but that it was deliberate and intentional I am sure. It was no natural little

shake of encouragement or remonstrance, such as a fond mother might give her too shy son at an embarrassing time. The guests waited in silence to see it done, and not till it was deliberately performed was the door flung open.

What did it originally mean? What idea lurked behind so strange and meaningless a practice? All meaning, of course, has been lost, but it was not invented for nothing. Was it, I wonder, one of those methods of purification, of riddance of ghosts and evil, unclean influences, which is specially necessary at critical times, or could it be done with the object of stimulating or arousing the reproductive powers, for which in primitive days beating with squills and branches was often employed? Or did both ideas linger in the strange, unusual custom? Shaking is not essentially different to beating. The two objects of stimulating and of purifying could both be attained together. Both are, of course, means of inflicting pain and discomfort, of heightening the powers of endurance; but that this was their object is unlikely. "Asceticism in any form," says Mr. Fraser, "is never primitive. The savage, it is true, in certain circumstances will voluntarily subject himself to pains and privations which appear to us wholly needless, but he never acts thus unless he believes that some solid temporal advantage is to be gained by so doing." It was no test then of endurance, but all through the primitive world there are suggestions of both the other ideas, the purificatory and the stimulative. According to Mr. Fraser, the divine scapegoats,

whether human or animal, to be met with in so many parts of the world, were slain every year in order that their powers might be passed on unimpaired, and full of life, to their divine successors. Hence, before they were slain, they were beaten seven times with squills and branches of wild fig, that their powers might lose nothing in vigour and potency. Even in Greece the victims of the Athenian Thargelia (the Harvest Festival) were similarly treated, but stoning took the place of beating. This was obviously to stimulate the reproductive powers, that they might be transmitted in full vigour to their successor, the new embodiment of the old god of vegetation.

"All over the world we have instances of beating people with certain plants and squills in times of sickness, to rid them of evil influences." Numerous are the instances which Mr. Fraser produces to show how universal the practice is at critical times of life—at birth, at marriage, at the dawn of manhood, at death. It is probable that beating or scourging as a religious or ceremonial rite was originally a mode of purification. It was meant to wipe off and drive away a dangerous contagion, whether personified, demoniacal, or not, which was supposed to be adhering physically, though invisibly, to the body of the sufferer.

There are, as far as I know, no instances of the substitution of shaking for beating, but it would obviously be a possible and a likely one. Is it perhaps allowable to suppose that the shaking of the bridegroom by his mother, so vigorously and so deliberately administered, was of the same nature and intention ?

I attempted in a lame way to explain my idea to the Greek cicerone, as we walked home, but she would have none of it. "*Mashallah!*" she exclaimed, relaxing into Turkish in her astonishment. "What an idea!—but these people are capable of any foolishness—you do not know them yet if you think they have *reasons* for what they do. Now when *we* wish to be rid of the *jinn* and the ghosts which haunt some places, our priests come and lay the ghosts by prayers and the waving of incense." That is the method of educated people.*

* Since writing this I have learnt that the custom of dealing blows on the back of the bridegroom is widely prevalent in Turkey. The young man's friends beat him with their fists as a regular ceremony on his wedding-day. The shaking by the mother may be an echo of such a custom.

XV

A WISHING-WELL

EDESSA was evidently famous for its sacred waters, sacred caves, sacred fishes, long ago. It is not unnatural, when we remember the dryness of its site, its nearness to the desert. The source of a stream in these conditions is always a sacred spot in the East; legends attach themselves easily to it. Heroes die or are born in its proximity.

Under the crest of the great rock promontory, crowned by its two twin columns, we came to a huge cave in the cliff. At certain times of the year, as at Ivriz, in the Taurus, a cataract of water dashes into it, and forms the full-born river which waters the plain below. Outside the cave which receives the water, the face of the cliff is covered with soft mud. The water keeps it damp and shining, and its surface all over is punctuated with round holes, giving the impression in the distance of a rock-scarp with niches for lamps hollowed out, such as you see at Arak-el-Emir, in Gilead. Some of these holes are filled with round pebbles. "How came they there?" Hassan inquires of the gendarme who has been told off for our protection.

From him I gather that the cave and its waters are sacred. It is, in fact, of the nature of a wishing-well. When a man comes here to wish, he must throw a stone against the wall of mud. If the sacred cave rejects the stone, he will be disappointed in his wish. If it sticks in the mud, the spirit of the cave, the living power that inhabits its sacred waters, has accepted and fulfilled it.

In the presence of the sacred fish and the sacred waters of old Edessa, still reverenced, still accounted holy in the twentieth century, it is Abraham who seems the religious innovator, the new-comer, the late development. Tel-el-Amarna tablets, and all the revelations of Egyptian and Hittite documents, go to prove that Abraham's time was very far removed from that primitive religious stage which sacred trees and sacred waters represent. His was an age already saturated with anthropomorphism, with tribal gods of strong local colouring and sharply defined lines. His own Jehovah had his own clearly marked characteristics. Yet it adds to our conception of this mighty watcher of the stars, this lonely desert chief, if we may think of him as influenced by all the best that nature-worship and pure animism had to give, as well as by the noble ethical conceptions of his tribal god.

"What is your wish, Pasha?" Hassan asks me when he gets my ear alone. We are standing round the cave: I am resting on a rock. "That Freedom may come to your country some day," I answer under my breath. I have lately learned where Hassan's sympathies lie, but this was before the days of the

Constitution. So I must be careful who hears me. I take up a pebble from the bed of the stream and throw it against the muddy surface. It sticks. "*Olur*" (It will be), he assures me gravely, and events have proved the sacred waters spake true.

"Now for your wish, Hassan." He pauses to make sure no one hears, then he mutters something quite inaudible to me.

He takes up his pebble slowly with a hand that shakes a little, and throws it unsteadily. It crashes back again into the stagnant pool at the bottom. Hassan turns away. The spirit of the cave has rejected the desire of his heart.

I begin to talk to the gendarme. I ask him foolish questions about the mosque and the cave. I do not want to see Hassan's face.

XVI

THE SACRED TREE

We had ridden in the morning from Banias, on the slopes of Hermon, to Dan, one of the famous sources of the Jordan. It was very hot, and we decided to pitch a tent there for the day, and ride on in the cool of the evening to Rasheiya. Most of us went to sleep in the tent after luncheon, but the heat inside was stifling, and I wandered out to find some shade outside. Over the source of the river, where it bursts full-born from the side of the mountains, there is a grove of shady old trees, planes and poplars. They make cool dark places under them, and keep cold as ice the bubbling green stream which dashes out into the plain from beneath. I had to stoop to pass under the thick low branches, and the delicious fragrant coolness underneath suggested some spacious hall full of moving shadows and tremulous light.

Away from the spring and on the further side from where I entered was one of the familiar *welis*, or sheikhs' tombs, which, with their little white-washed domes, are familiar all over the country. These *welis* or *mezárs* (shrines), as they soon become, are often found close to a group of old trees. These

are the ancient "groves," the "high places," against which Elijah and Isaiah and Jeremiah thundered their denunciations, but all in vain. More often than not the groves are on the tops of hills. They are sometimes by the side of a river source, a mountain lake, or a hot sulphur spring. They are to be found by many different natural objects, these "high places under every green tree, upon the high mountains and upon the hills." Sometimes they stand alone in connection with no other strange or remarkable thing. Unashamed they still persist, though the religion which was their rival and which seemed indeed to master them, keeps but feeble hold upon the country. This other newer religion has scratched the surface of the human life around, but underneath the strong primitive natural roots, which support all religions worth the name, still thrive and flourish unabashed. These venerated groves are some of the signs of those roots. The grove at Dan is connected with a *weli*. Through the iron grating, at the side, the coffin of the sheikh can be plainly seen. It is the narrow black coffin of Islam, and at the head lies the simple red fez. He was only a humble little saint, this sheikh of Dan, but because they buried him within the sacred grove his reputation has spread far and wide, and Christians, Jews, and even Druses, as well as Moslems, visit his shrine and do him reverence.

Near the *weli* I found a mossy bed to stretch myself, and there in the deep shade of the two great ilex trees that overhung it, I spent the long hot afternoon. Flat on my back I gazed up into the shadowy luminous

branches. Through the twinkling leaves above, little patches of intensest blue revealed the stainless noontide sky. A soft breeze whispered through the branches, and the leaves rustled murmuring together. Their deep shadows threw up the light on the glancing sunlit leaves, and tall and straight the parent trunk stood sentinel beneath, sun-flecked and deeply scored. No wonder spirits dwelt in these trees, I thought to myself. It was only another way of saying the trees were spirits themselves, divine, living things, symbols, yes, and vessels too, of unseen spiritual forces. What symbol could be more fitting—the strong and sheltering branches, the life instinct in every twig and moving leaf, the grace, the mystery, the rhythm of the whole ?

So it was plain others had thought, for long ages before I came there. As my eyes wandered over the green branches, I saw that low down they were ragged and bare, and all stripped of their leaves. Instead, the dry twigs were hung with objects which by much travel had grown familiar to me, the objects one learns to associate with all sacred mysterious places in the East. There were the dirty rags, the wisps of twisted hair, the little strings of beads or common charms—all the worthless cast-off things which mean so much to those who cast them off for such a purpose, and are mere rubbish to everybody else. So these two trees over the whitewashed tomb were sacred trees. The whole grave bore a sacred mysterious character, but these were marked out and separate from all the other trees. And as such

A SACRED TREE, PALESTINE
"STILL CAME THE VILLAGE PEOPLE FROM THE MOUNTAINS ROUND TO VISIT THE SACRED TREES"

their life was still bound up, as it had been for ages, with the human life around them. Still came the village people from the mountains round to visit the sacred trees, to bind themselves up, in their troubles and their sicknesses, with the stronger life, the mysterious unseen life, which the sacred tree possessed and could bestow.

And while I lay there on my back in the shade, I heard the rustle of feet through the dried-up grass, and the snapping of dry, leafless twigs pushed hastily aside. I saw a woman stoop to pass beneath them, and she came into the shade. She did not see me, and she need not, for I was close to the tomb, and evidently that was not the object of her visit. Some tall rank weeds and grass trees hid me from her sight, though I could still watch her. The woman I watched was tall and young. She wore the blue loose dress of the Lebanon women and the long, coarse white veil. In her arms she carried a baby. She came swiftly and with decision in her movements. There was trouble in her face and great perplexity, but there was no doubt of the reason she had come to the tree. Kneeling down on the ground she unwinds the baby from its long thick wrappings, and lays it on the ground beside her. I cannot see its face, but it must be very little and weak, for I can hear its wailing cry, and it is feeble and struggling. When the swaddling clothes are loosened, the wailing ceases for a minute, and I see one tiny toe kick weakly in the air. The air is warm and breathless, even in the shade; it will not hurt the baby, and she smiles

as she bends crooning over it, with relief in her troubled face, because the weight that drags at her heart has ceased. She had done all that was possible for it—all but the one last service for which she had come here to-day, and yet it was wasted with fever, and at times life seemed almost flickering out. Afterwards, when we had established a friendship, I learnt from the mother all the efforts she had made to cure the child, all the devotion, all the pathetic, useless prescriptions that had been advised. The blue bead had been unavailing—so the old witch woman from Banias had been summoned; but her long, low-muttered incantations over the little body had been ineffective too. Then she had carried it far over the mountains to Jezzin, where a famous *hoja* from Damascus had prescribed a long and elaborate prayer written out on a sheet of paper, and enjoined upon the mother that if the wearing of it next to the skin for a couple of days had no result, the child must swallow it, as a more drastic measure, dirty paper and all. And all this she had done. That was only two days ago, and with the help of orange-juice and water, every scrap of paper, torn into tiny pieces, had disappeared down the gasping, swollen little throat. And it hung still to life by an even feebler thread, and the last long journey, the last desperate appeal for help to the sacred tree, was all that was left to the mother. To this she had pinned all her fast-waning hopes. It was her only child.

While the baby lies there on the ground and feebly stretches its wasted limbs, I watch, with anxious

sympathy, this last attempt to save the life that means so much. The baby still wears a ragged little cotton shirt under the swaddling bands, and from this the mother carefully tears a rag. Then, rising, she scans anxiously the dry leaf-stripped branches around her. She holds the polluted discoloured thing—the holy thing—the little rag in her hand. All the fever and the pain and the weakness of her child is concentrated and bound up in that rag. For her was the duty of bringing that concentrated evil—that heavy-laden rag—into contact with the holy, life-giving tree. The rag must be bound to it, cast off upon its branches. Choosing the place, the woman fastens the rag to a branch with steady, deliberate fingers, and then sits down again by her baby and contemplates it dangling from the twig. Who shall say what hope, what agony of suspense, fills her troubled mind? She glances from the fluttering rag on the tree to the dying baby at her side. The mother who watches the child across her knee when he lies there fresh from the surgeon's knife, looks as she does. She does not understand the operation of the ritual act she has just performed. Nor does the Western mother always understand the operation she trusts will save her baby's life. Both together submit in faith to the hands of a greater wisdom, a greater power, than their own. In the West it is but a human power. In the East it is the power of unseen spirit things. It is the power that dwells in trees and shapeless stones and dark black walls and bubbling springs. For there the people think

the unseen power manifests itself, most surely concentrates.

But ages ago the mothers had clearer knowledge of why they hung these things to the sacred tree, these rags off the sick bodies of their children, these wisps of hair from their heads, these beads that have hung round their necks. The tree was a god, a divine, a potent thing. It could, through its own material means, transmit its spiritual powers. And these spiritual powers could be claimed and appropriated by those who sought them rightly.

But, more than that, this god of the tree could exercise yet other functions. Divine functions, too, such as are demanded always of their gods by weak men and women. The tree gives not only help and blessing. It carries their burdens too. All the burdens of poor humanity it can take on its shoulders, the disease, the suffering, the worry, the dread fear, above all the sin, the evil spiritual thing, the social fault, which makes men lonely and cuts them off from human fellowship and divine. The sacred tree is the sorrow-bearer, the sin-bearer too. Primitive, ineradicable, is this confidence of the human heart. The God it serves must be the scapegoat. The pains, the sins of mankind must be laid upon his head, must be physically transferred to him. And so "he bears the sin of many," and "he who knew no sin, became sin for us."

That was why in the early days of the world the mothers tied the soiled rags and the wisps of hair to the sacred tree. The evils that wasted their

children were concentrated in them, and by this means could be done away with "on the tree." Still they tie them to-day, but they do not know the reason why. They have forgotten. But still they hope and trust the tree will be merciful and heal them.

I was thinking this when I heard Antoine's voice outside my grove of trees, and in his own peculiar French he announced that tea was ready, and that "*Monsieur votre frère*" was anxious to strike the camp and be gone. The mother looks up startled, but she does not suspect she is entrapped, and we must not let her. Slipping out round the back of the whitewashed *weli*, I join Antoine outside the trees, and propose that together we should pay it a visit before going back to camp. He thinks I have been at the source of the river all the afternoon, and readily agrees. Meanwhile, the mother picks up her baby, and steps back nearer the trunk of the tree, so that we shall imagine she only came into the grove to get shelter from the sun. We salaam her casually, and pass the tree to the tomb, but as we return neither Antoine nor I can resist a peep at the baby, and we establish more friendly relations. The woman is in need of sympathy, and Antoine has always much to give when a baby is in question. She tells her story anxiously to him, and he interprets it to me. She tells him all about the fever, and all she has done to cure it, the witch woman from Banias, the celebrated *hoja* from Damascus. Only of the last expedient resorted to, the ritual act to which all her waning hopes are pinned, she does not tell us. That

is too sacred, too private for any ears but those who have suffered too and have resorted to such means themselves. I ask no questions. She is interested and grateful when I descant on the merits of fresh milk, and after chewing them in her own mouth, she readily doctors the baby with the minute quinine grains I prescribe. But I know all the time that her real faith is in the fluttering rag on the tree. All the milk and quinine in the world will not shake that confidence.

XVII

THE YEZEEDIS

THE ancient plain of Assyria stretched away before us, unbroken but for the long, green mound of Nineveh, to the bank of the Tigris. Just beside us rose the smaller mound of Khorsabad, where once the city of Sargon dominated the valley. We had ridden out there from Mossul, and as I rode I talked to Mustafa Chawush (sergeant) of many things. Mustafa was a *zaptieh* from the *konak* at Mossul, and he was almost a pure negro. I suppose his forefathers were slaves from the East Coast of Africa, captured in old days by Arab slave-dealers and brought to the Arabian deserts, whence they drifted, for warfare or for trade, to the banks of the river. Mustafa had been in "Bembey" (Bombay) and bought horses for a great "Nawwab" of Baghdad. Being in the service of the Porte, Mustafa carefully drew a veil over his origin, and lost no opportunity of extolling His Sublime Majesty the Sultan. The deeds and exploits of the Sultan's emissaries in Kurdistan and Arabia were his favourite theme, especially how they had exterminated the heretics and put them to the sword. The Tigris Valley abounds in heretics. It is the happy hunting-

ground for the valiant among the orthodox. There was the famous Bey of Ruwunduz who had massacred the heretics indiscriminately a century ago. There was Bedr Khan of bloody memory, who had applied his energies to exterminating the Nestorians. There were the two famous Pashas of Mossul, who had organised so successfully the annual Yezeedi-hunt in the Plain.

The personal religion of this son of Africa consisted, in all probability, of the averting and propitiating of spirits, and the practice of secret pagan rites. But he had successfully mastered the phraseology of Islam, and to all in authority he was above all things a faithful follower of the Prophet. He knew too well the way his bread was buttered. Mustafa shared with all Easterns the admiration for the strong and ruthless man, the man who can kill, and who laughs while he kills. Bedr Khan and Mohammed Reshid and Hafiz Ali Pasha, these were his heroes, men all of them whose names are written in blood.

The Tigris Valley has always been a hotbed of religious sects. It is a soil in which heresies thrive, in which old pagan beliefs die hard. There are old heathen cults here with traces of Zoroastrianism and sun-worship clinging about them. There are others with a veneer of Mohammedanism or Christianity, and a solid foundation underneath of animal worship and fetishism and magic. Indian polytheism has left its traces on the beliefs of the country. There are the heresies of Islam in abundance, the most important among them, Shiism, being at home in Persia near by.

The early sects which rent in sunder the intellectual world of the Middle Ages, strove for mastery on the banks of the Tigris. The Kharijites, the Mokhtarites, the Assassins, the Karmates, all arose within reach of the river. More recently the Puritanical sect of the Wahhabis convulsed the desert peoples, and took violent possession of the whole country to the gates of Damascus. It was on the borders of Persia that appeared the Bâb, that spiritual outcome of Islam, the influence of whom has reached far into the Western world.

The heretical Churches of Christianity too are represented. The Armenian Church touches only the sources of the Tigris and of the Euphrates, but the old Chaldæan or Nestorian Church, and the Jacobites, all with inherent possibilities of reform, are closely connected with the valley. Those more primitive sects too, half Christian, half pagan, the Sabæans or Christians of St. John, the Kizil-bashes, with their sacramental rites, the Ansariyeh, with their worship of young life, be it babe or bud, these all linger still, though oppressed and often harassed, within the borders of Dar-ul-Islam. On each in turn the Turk has waged his warfare, and in the case of a few all organised life in their systems is dead. Of these last are the Yezeedis, perhaps of all remote and strange developments of religious life in these parts the most interesting and suggestive. It is they who were hunted for sport each year by the Pashas of Mossul, who invited as their guests for the occasion the neighbouring Pashas of Baghdad and Mardin. "Why did they hunt them down?" I asked of

Mustafa, and he looked at me with contempt. "Why?" he muttered, incredulous. "Why, they were *dogs*, Effendim! Did you not know?—filthy, disgusting!" He added this with an affectation of such horror and loathing, that instinctively I pictured to myself a people of animal instincts, vile in their habits, hateful to their fellow-men. "Why," he continued in explanation, "they could neither read nor write—they had no *book!*" This was the supreme offence in the eyes of this latest convert to Islam, the convert whose zeal outran that of old disciples. But indeed it is the supreme offence for all followers of Islam. It is this test, the possession of a sacred book, which makes the dividing line between the Moslem, the Christian, and the Jew with their *books* on the one side, and all the rest of the world on the other. There are differences of degree of course between Koran, Gospel, and Law, but at least the peoples who say "It is written" are on a higher level than those who say "It is done."

The last great hunt of Yezeedis was in 1892. Pursued with ruthless ferocity, thousands were slaughtered and thousands more degraded. Sheikh Adi, their venerable shrine, was desecrated, their ancient hierarchy disorganised, their annual festivals disallowed. As a living and organised system Yezeedism is extinct. A few of the race survive in the country, chiefly the weakly and useless among them. They do the most menial of the work on small Arab farms, they follow the big caravans of wandering Bedawin, they lurk in the least reputable bazaars of the large desert towns.

Hewers of wood and drawers of water for the dominant races of the country, the last of the Yezeedis will soon vanish away.

That night we lodged in a small Arab farm in the plain. The farm stood at the foot of Khorsabad, the city of Sargon, and consisted, like most Eastern *khans* and *serais*, of the high wall of sun-dried mud enclosing an open yard with the well, and the mud sheds round the walls, where dwell the farmer's cattle, his camels, and his family. We sat all the evening on the low mud divan that runs along one side of the wall outside. In a glory of gold the sun set over the long green back of Nineveh before us. Achmet, the *zaptieh*, who spoke Turkish, acted as interpreter for us into Arabic, and we talked with the farmer and his men. The talk turned as usual to famous Pashas and their exploits. Further north the talk round the fire at night had turned always to Ibrahim Pasha, the Hamidiyeh warrior, whose exploits were the terror and yet the fascination of the harassed people, Kurd and Armenian. Here we talked of men of equal fame, whose prey lay further south. The Yezeedi-hunts were recalled, and great hilarity was caused by the farmer's description of how one of the victims was run to earth at the back of his own farm, and the gruesome details of the unequal struggle. I expressed a wish to see one of the fast-vanishing race, and the request was met with roars of good-humoured laughter which I did not understand. Nobody took the request seriously, I discovered. I might have asked for a species of vermin. And only when Hassan gave one of his

peremptory commands, "Fetch it—she bids you," could they be prevailed upon to move in the matter.

From the dark recesses of a shed where Adi, the Yezeedi serf, is huddled in the dust among the goats he has folded for the night, they drag him out into the light. A sorry object he is in his torn and filthy blue shirt, the foolish frightened face with one eye knocked out glancing vacantly round. They treat him as a huge joke—who has ever wished to look at Adi before? He is half-witted and the butt of everybody's ridicule. He hangs back and expostulates feebly while they drag and push and tease him along, twitting him with his name, "Yezeedi," whispering into his ear the name he instinctively dreads and recoils at—"*Sheytán.*" The poor feeble mind can attach no particular meaning to the word, but he shivers when he hears it. Then he tries to get free again, and smiles stupidly, muttering to himself. They tumble him down into the dust before me, and leave him there while they wander off to their work. The fun is over, for Hassan protects the boy with a stick while he squats in the dust, and they can tease him no more. He sits there all the evening alone with Hassan and me, and we eat our supper out in the starlight. Across the plain to the river the long mound of Nineveh is dark black against the fading gold of the sunset. Behind us the snow mountains of Kurdistan are cold and remote against a sky of delicate lilac. Above us is the mound of Khorsabad, second only to Sennacherib's city in importance and extent.

And we sit together in that ancient plain of primeval memory, we three, Pagan, Christian, Moslem, and eat our meagre meal together. From that old world for which the Plain was home, we all have sprung in morals, in thought, in religion, if not in physical life. Pagan we all are at heart, and do not know it, because the religions of the *books* have hidden that part of us up, and covered it over. It is there all the same. It is a weak and attenuated type of Paganism indeed that Adi represents. It is slow-brained and half-witted like himself now, but its source is pure and reasonable, founded like all primitive beliefs on a consistent view of the world.

The Yezeedi system of belief at its best is no unworthy descendant of that view. Christianity and Islam have both laid their fingers on it, seeking to overlay and cover up the natural religion beneath, to make it forget its origin, but stronger, more persistent than either, its shoots stand out still, fresh and strong. The first principle of the Yezeedi system, its substructure, is pure animism. There are the plainest traces of sun-worship, whether of the primitive savage reverence for the sun, or of its organised religious development in Zoroastrianism, it is impossible to say. White bulls were sacrificed annually at the festival of Shems-ed-din; the dead were buried towards the rising sun; at rising and setting, the sun was worshipped and hailed. The Yezeedis have a peculiar reverence for fire. They will never spit into it, and at the festival of Sheikh Adi, bonfires were lit on all the hills. Layard was witness of this, and it is only in the last fifteen years

that the festivals have lost their spirit and dropped their customs. Animal worship too is evident. God created seven spirits or angels to rule the world. Each of them was to reign for 7000 years. The first of them is Melek Taous, the angel-peacock. His reign is not yet over. Representations of this angel in the form of metal birds are honoured at the shrines, and carried about by the *Qawwâls* (or deacons) on their visitations for healing and ritual ceremonies. In the palace of the King of Babylon Layard discovered images of golden birds, which he connected in his mind with the sacred birds of the Yezeedis. Sheep are sacrificed by the priests over the graves of distinguished men, and their dung laid on the tombs. It is probable that in their reverence for running water, too, the old animistic belief in the powers of nature is to be traced. They regard numerous wells and springs as sacred, and hold festivals beside them. They carry on the universal old custom of throwing money into the wells. No Yezeedi will enter a public bath, nor will he eat fish.

Doctrinally, the honour paid to Melek Taous, the angel-peacock, is the distinctive feature of the Yezeedi system. This belief in a presiding spirit who rules over the world, one to whom God delegates His powers, who acts as God and yet is not God, this is the half-way house always between a full-blown polytheism, such as ancient Greece and modern India provide, and the strict monotheisms of Islam and Hebraism. It is nearer, intellectually, to the first than the last.

It is this that separates heretical Shiism with its doctrine of the *Imam*, the Druses with their Hakim, the Bâbis with their Bâb, from orthodox Sunniism. It is the orthodox Moslem's suspicion of the nature of Christ, the doubt whether He is to be regarded as truly one with God, that makes him refuse the least approach to a common understanding with Christianity. The Yezeedis accord an equally ambiguous place to Melek Taous. It is dangerously near to that given to God Himself, and yet his functions are different. He is the author of evil as God is of good—only so can the instinctive morality of the primitive mind reconcile itself to the existence of evil in the world.

Melek Taous is inferior to God, because evil has no ultimate reality—*Sheytán*, the instrument and embodiment of evil, must not be mentioned. Thus, by this silence, is its power lessened and weakened. It is this element in the belief which connects Yezeedism, with its far greater and more complex religious ancestry, with the mystic pagan sect of the Sabæans, as well as with the modern mystics of Persia, the *Sufis*. That evil has no essential reality, but is only a negative quality necessary to the reality of the good, is the foundation principle of Buddhism, and of all the most vital and truly philosophical beliefs of the East. It was once held by many branches of Christianity. In these latter days, in the new Christian sects which all over the world are emphasising afresh some of the most fundamental ideas of the great body of Christian doctrine, uppermost

of all is this insistence on the non-reality of evil, and its natural practical consequences. Christian Science, the sect with the largest number of adherents, repeats it in no uncertain voice. On the pagan side Yezeedism, unfaltering, forbids the mere mention of the evil one.

On Yezeedism, as on so many religious systems, Christianity has not failed to leave its mark. Its most prominent ritual act—baptism—has been universally adopted by the Yezeedis. By rights it takes place at Sheikh Adi, the principal shrine, but as a matter of fact one of the *Qawwáls* (or deacons) brings a skin of the holy water to the child. The sign of the cross has lingered among them as a charm, and Christ, *Melek Isa* (the angel-Jesus), is held in reverence. He did not die on the cross—but ascended to Heaven, to appear once again with the *Imam* Mahdi. At marriage the bride must, if possible, visit a Christian church, and in large towns it is customary for her to kiss the priest's hand and to receive the sacrament.

Such is the body of Yezeedi belief and practice. A poor attenuated, feeble thing in itself, an incongruous mass of survivals from many sources, its interest lies in the substructure of pure animism, of simple paganism, which rests beneath.

So I was thinking to myself as I laid down my cigarette, and looked up into the glittering sky of the Assyrian night. After all, it did not matter much. "Our little systems have their day."

. . . . . .

A foolish croaking laugh broke the silence. Adi had made a tiny heap of dust, and knocked it down again. The feat delighted him hugely. He sat and clapped his hands.

XVIII

ON THE FRONTIER OF TURKEY

RILO MONASTERY, the great national sanctuary of the Bulgarian race, is worth all the jolting and bumping that must be endured to reach it. The roads from Sofia leave something to be desired even in these days of Bulgarian advance. Rilo Dagh, the highest of the Balkan ranges, runs along the frontier of Turkey, and the day we reached the monastery we had drunk coffee with Turkish officers in Macedonia. The last three hours of the ascent take you up a valley resplendent with yellow beeches, and broken with rugged cliffs of rock. It was pitch dark, and the driver, a vociferous Czech, swore lustily. Under the arch of a huge entrance gateway, the horses came to a dead stop, and we sat down on the stones of the courtyard to await instructions. A wet mist hung over the court, the horses steamed, and an unsavoury odour greeted our nostrils. Not a sound stirred. Two dim lamps on the walls revealed domes, towers, and galleries far above us. It was like a city of the dead.

A sleepy monk with a key appeared at last and showed us our cell, and we were glad to lie down on the hard divan. In the night the wind sighed in the forests, and a bell tolled once for midnight mass. Then through the open door of our cell we heard the pattering of bare feet and the closing of the church doors. Far away an owl hooted.

Next morning the sun shone, and Rilo had clothed itself afresh. From the loggia of our landing we looked down into the great court, the vast five-cornered monastery enclosing it. The sloping roof and projecting eaves of red tiles, the dark wooden balconies and windows, were bright in contrast. The bold black and white painted façades gave the necessary Eastern touch to an otherwise medieval building. After mass at 7 a.m. a young monk brings us a tin of fresh milk and a pile of gritty black bread for breakfast, and then squats down beside us on the balcony to talk. Poor Père Joseph's tall black hat and sombre robes do not become him. No monk ever boasted more innocent black eyes, nor a more irrepressible sense of humour. His secular name of Christoff suited him better than the name of his adoption —Joseph. Bulgaria is still unblighted by the bane of social distinctions, and till four years ago our friend Christoff, who carried on a millinery business in Sofia, had been a well-known and popular figure in the society of the capital. But the day came when the light went out for poor Christoff, and he broke his heart over a young girl's death. Sick of the world, he fled to the mountains where, in the seclusion of the

monastery, he has buried his sorrow, and worked out his salvation in the hermit's cave up the valley. But life is still warm in his veins, and reason will not always be quieted. The consolations of religion which comforted him four years ago are found rather wanting to-day, and he is conscious no longer of the religious rapture that once was his when he knelt in the sacred cave of St. John of Rilo. In moments of friendly intercourse Père Joseph whispers of an escape by night. He longs to cut off his long hair and to sell French hats again to the young ladies of Sofia.

The educated classes of Bulgaria—and practically there are no others nowadays—have very little time to think of religion. Politics absorb them to the exclusion of everything else. Even the peasant in his gay Sunday attire gets through his eikon-kissing very hurriedly in the church, and escapes to the more congenial *khan* to discuss the last fray on the border, and the fate of the last band of refugees sent back into Turkey. In Macedonia the devotion to the National Church is ardent and sincere, but its motive is largely political. Here in happy Bulgaria, it has little significance in life. True, seven thousand peasants flocked to Rilo this year to do honour to the national saint St. John, but the number who embrace the religious life is dwindling rapidly.

In the Middle Ages, Rilo was one of the most popular monasteries of the Levant. Under Turkish rule, Rilo was still crowded with monks, for in those days of insecurity and violence it served as a sanctuary,

respected even by the Turks. But in these days of prosperity and peace, less than fifty monks are left to mumble over the liturgy and pore over the MSS. in the library, a sorry little band where once there were five hundred. Here and there is the face of a scholar of the old school, self-contained and serious, or the proud ecclesiastic with inflexible voice and imperious air, but most of them are the faces of disappointed men.

The abbot of the monastery is still a great landowner. The forests and the vineyards for miles around are his, but he has been obliged to give a concession for wood-cutting to a foreign firm, and the days of the forests, alas ! are numbered. He was away seeing to the vintage when we were there, but his predecessor in the sacred office, the present vice-abbot, received us and regaled us in his cell, conspicuous for its barbarous attempts at Western furniture, with delicious preserves and Turkish coffee.

In the middle of the court stands the church, its domes covered with lead, and elaborately decorated with frescoes inside and out. Here are the tortures of the damned. Devils are busy manufacturing new and ingenious methods of punishment, suitable to the offences committed. We are informed with pride that they are quite new, and represent the most approved modern views of the next world. The peasants shiver, or ought to shiver, when they contemplate the fate that possibly awaits them. The talk about a reformed Eastern Church seems rather beside the mark at Rilo. Inside the church, pictures of St. John and his life,

of Bible stories with wonderful accretions, and of the benefactors of the monastery in all ages, adorn the walls. The colours are dazzling. A huge gilt screen, rich in eikons and pictures, contains the relic *par excellence* of the church, the tooth of St. John himself. At one corner of the church stands the old thirteenth-century tower, the last remaining part of the original building. The greater part of it was restored in the last century after a fire. Two sides of the monastery have been badly injured in recent times by earthquake.

A real monastic peace pervades the library, where jewelled eikons, holy relics set in gold and silver, crosses of precious stones, and ancient MSS. are treasured and beloved. Most interesting among the treasures are the gifts of early Turkish Sultans to abbots of the monastery, and the original firman from the Sultan Mohammed who first overran Bulgaria. Older still and much more valuable is the firman in the ancient national tongue from a Bulgarian emperor in the thirteenth century, whether an Asen or a Peter the monks were not quite sure.

Rilo was always respected by the Turks, and successfully resisted the embellishments and the injuries of foreigners. In the dark days of the Bulgarian race, when religion, language, and customs were equally suppressed and forgotten, Rilo always stood firm as the national sanctuary, and owing largely to its steadfastness, the Bulgarians are a nation to-day. In the rest of Bulgaria, it is no compliment to call a thing old. Age implies the Turkish hoof, and even in the Turkish

bazaars of Philippopolis, where ancient copper and threadbare carpets are for sale, we must beware of insisting too outspokenly on what is genuinely antique Turkish.

There are five hundred cells in the monastery, most of them spacious and beautiful rooms, guiltless of furniture beyond the hardest divans, but rich in old carpets, and decorated with ceilings of carved beech-wood and painted friezes. The monks, if they love a glass of raki somewhat too dearly, keep up their reputation for hospitality, and in cell after cell we are regaled with the familiar spoonfuls of jam and cups of Turkish coffee.

High above the monastery, folding in on every side, tower the mountains. In the early morning, while the sun rose and the frost was still crisp in the shade, we rode away from the monastery to climb up the valley behind. The pass to Samakov runs to 8000 feet high. The great forests, belonging to Rilo, clothe the mountain to within 2000 feet of the top. The path winds up through the beech trees, yellow and gold in their dying glory, and among them you lose sight of the highest peaks. Above our heads the thick roof of red-brown leaves hangs glowing and rich. Here and there a gap lets in the sun, revealing a splendour of dazzling gold against the blue of a stainless sky. At our feet, on the fallen leaves, soft and soaking, pale mists rest. The rich wet earth distils odours, sensuous, impelling. A waft of fir-fragrance from the heights beyond, telling of white snows and wild places, invigorates the senses.

Straight and majestic rise the stems of the beeches, softest grey-green, stained with rose. They stand uncrowded and full of dignity in the very ecstasy of sunlit glory. By the stream that races down the valley there are little open places, green with moss and framed by the kindly beeches. Warmed by their shelter and wet with every dew of heaven, they are rich with frail crocuses, waxen white and delicate mauve.

A little Albanian boy of sixteen attends the horses, in the rough white tunic of the country, a faun-like creature, supple as a willow and lovely to look at. His delight in life is uncontrollable, and when he leaps, singing, from rock to rock, calling to his dog on the track of a wolf, or cursing his horses by all the holy men of three religions, he embodies the spirit of the strong races of the North. The silent Turk who rides with us looks on at him amazed. Yet when he lies at full length among the moss and the crocuses, his red lips stained with mountain bilberries, his dark eyes heavy with sleep, he breathes of the South. Born both of the sunshine and the snow, the blood of two worlds beats in his veins.

Above the burning glow of the beech trees, colour yet more abandoned in its daring blazes in the sun. Wild cherries and maples revel scarlet against the black line of the firs, a sombre gloom which supports the riot of colour below.

Up in the fir-woods, solemn and deathly still, our horses tread noiseless. Pine needles, mauve-grey, are smooth and soft. Here in mid-winter the wolves lurk, hungry.

Even the firs are behind us now. Bare and windswept the great heights stretch to the snows. Forests and tarns are gone. Worlds of white cloud lie silent beneath.

XIX

THE GARDENS OF ADONIS

As I wandered at Verona through the great church of S. Anastasius, I noticed all the sacred images which had been dressed up for Easter, and adorned with their festive trappings. A special place was devoted to the dainty little Madonna, who sat with a smug smile upon her waxen features. She was dressed in a pink satin gown, and a deep lace-edged apron. She had a crown of gilded cardboard on her head, and a spray of orange blossom in her hair. She is always a bride, the little Madonna, though she holds the baby in her stiff wax arms, and stares at it with round bead eyes. Then there is the Christ on the cross, but the people always like the little Madonna in pink the best. Of course, at this season, the *pietà* attracts a goodly number. The emaciated Christ, all stiff and dead, lies in His mother's arms, or alone, with tense drawn face, in a niche behind some altar. In a little side-chapel before such a *pietà*, many forms of worshippers knelt and prayed. They were women mostly. They had black shawls over their heads, and some of them had brought their

baskets of vegetables and bundles from the market in brown-paper parcels, and laid them down on the floor beside them. The babies crawled and trotted about, at home, as Italian babies always are, in the church they know so well. No one else was there, and I sat down among them on one of the low forms in front of the monument.

It was a stone sculpture of the fourteenth century, and was let into a recess in the wall. The figures were life-size and partly painted, but so faded was the colour that only a faint subdued red about them was lit up by the light from the high clerestory windows in the opposite wall. Some of the mourning apostles were grouped round the central figure, and the head of the dead Christ was supported in the arms of His mother. It was the commonest type of such monuments, but it was the principal one in S. Anastasius, and from its age and artistic excellence, it had gained reputation and importance. After the Madonna in pink, it attracted more worshippers than any other shrine. What impressed me, however, was not so much the beauty of the figure itself, but the quaint decorations with which they had adorned it. Here were none of the familiar accessories of the shrines in Roman churches. There were no artificial flowers, no silver candlesticks, no Venetian lamps.

Before the middle of the central figure, and at the head and at the feet, they had placed rough earthenware pots. No rare exotics grew in them, no gaudy paper flowers. In the distance the pots seemed full merely of fresh green grass. Coming nearer, I found it

was humble mustard and cress. An unworthy offering, it seemed, for the Christ. But then, as I lingered in the gloom of the little side-chapel, and the worshipping women came and went and knelt and rose up again, the pots of mustard and cress by the side of the dead Christ spoke to me of long past ages, and of other gods, forgotten now; and in the dim light of the past they seemed no longer mean. I looked at the features of the Christ, so thin and drawn, and in their place I saw the features of another, dead too, but smiling, and very young. It was the Lord Adonis, struck down in his prime, the Beloved of Aphrodite.

"How beautiful to behold; he lies on his silver couch, with the first down on his cheeks, the thrice-beloved Adonis—Adonis, beloved even among the dead."

Annually, for ever afterwards, they mourned for him, lamenting his early death with wailing, and rejoicing over his resurrection with eager, thankful songs. He took many forms. He was Attis in Syria, Tammuz in Phrygia, Osiris in Egypt, Dionysus in Greece. But in the person of the Lord Adonis all were included. They were all one indeed, many forms but one idea, many manifestations of one divine personality. It was the women chiefly who mourned for Adonis. On the Syrian coast, as I have seen, they made up images of the god, and carried him in mourning procession for burial in the sea. At Alexandria they celebrated his resurrection from the dead, and carried the image, rejoicing, through the streets.

"Oh, Aphrodite—lo, from the stream eternal of Acheron, they have brought back to thee Adonis."

So the women sang. "The Lord is risen indeed." Before his image they heaped magnificence, the wealth of the earth's abundance.

"Before him lie all ripe fruits that the tall trees' branches bear, and the delicate gardens arrayed in baskets of silver, and the golden vessels are full of incense of Syria. . . . Here are built for him shadowy bowers of green, all laden with tender anise, and children flit overhead—the little Loves. . . ."

Are these pots of mustard and cress, then, the only relics of such profusion?

In Alexandria, too, they sang the sacred marriage of Aphrodite and Adonis. Theocritus has made us familiar with the scene from the merry chatter of Gorgo and Praxinoe at the Adoneia. The lovers reclined together, the fruit and flowers around them.

"One bed Cypris keeps, and one the rosy-armed Adonis—a bridegroom of eighteen or nineteen years is he; his kisses are not rough, the golden down being yet upon his lips."

So brief, so magically happy was his life.

The date of the ceremonies on the Mediterranean coasts was determined by the reddening of the River Orontes, a natural phenomenon which occurred each year, when the melting snows washed down the red earth from the hills. But it was always in spring, and it typified, of course, the death and decay of vegetation in winter, and its annual resurrection in the spring. The date was not the only proof of its

meaning. For eight days before the image was carried out for burial, the women planted baskets and earthenware pots with vegetable seeds. Barley, lettuce, wheat, mustard and cress, these were the commonest. Quickly the little gardens sprang up, and they tended them carefully. Then they too were carried out with the effigy, and cast away to death. Typical these ceremonies, of course, were, but they were magical too. As vegetation-charms, their exact and punctual performance ensured the growth of the crops. Gradually as the glory of Adonis waned before the rising of another star, and the light of the Christ heralded another dawn in religion, the ceremonies of the Adoneia were dropped and forgotten. But the attendant rites, the planting of the " garden of Adonis," the tending of the pots of humble seeds, these lingered yet. They waited for the coming of another, who once again would typify the new-born spring. And very long he did not tarry. Christ, with His springtide Passion, slipped quite naturally into the place of Adonis, who had passed. But the meaning of the little gardens was lost. They offered them to the dead Christ as tributes and gifts. With the dead Adonis they had meant much more. The life of which he himself was symbol was expressed in them. So once more religion took over the magic rite, wove her own interpretation into it. The meaning of the rite was reversed.

Still to-day the women tend the gardens of Adonis, and decorate the images of the Christ with them. In Sicily and lower Italy such pots of mustard and cress,

of barley and lettuce, are found at Easter-time before the *pietà*, and in the Holy Sepulchres which they make in the churches for Good Friday. I had not expected to find them in one of the northernmost towns of Italy. Far has Adonis travelled indeed. There he lay in the church at Verona, the dead young god. But it is not the Adonis we have known. They are the features of another. Thin and drawn they are, and deeply marked with pain. The long journey northwards has made him white and pale. The body, too, has changed. It is no longer the white form of the young Greek boy, naked and unashamed. The wasted limbs are swathed in bands. No, this is not Adonis, the dauntless, laughing boy whom Aphrodite loved. It is the suffering Christ.

Yet He lies in the arms of a woman too, and the woman weeps for Him. But it is not Aphrodite. She was always young and lovely, born of the foam and the wind. This woman is young no longer. The hands that hold the Lord are thin, the eyes are heavy with tears. This is the mother who tends her Son. It is the lover no more. So when in the course of ages the dying Christ took the place of Adonis, of Attis too, and Tammuz, and all the young slain gods, He brought His mother with Him, and she laid firm hold upon the hearts of men. The baby Christ in His mother's arms, this form the people specially loved. It moved their hearts when nothing else availed. The figure of the mother who holds her dying Son on her breast, the grown man, this has

never had quite the same attraction for men. It is less eternally human, less universally appealing.

But after all it is the *pietà*, this mother with her Son, the Son she consoles in His manhood's agony, which symbolises more truly than the Madonna and Babe the altered human conditions that Christianity has imposed on society. The mother of babes and all young things, the universal nursing-mother of all young life, this we have had before. Rhea, Cybele, the corn-mother of Mexico, Isis the mother of Egypt, Demeter — we know them well. They are all familiar to us — full-breasted, powerful. These figures all suggested the idea of reverence for birth, for generation. But the special significance of Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, is the permanent character of motherhood, the divine nature of the human family with the mother as the centre. It is this that Christ wished to proclaim, this permanent character he wished to establish. And under His dominion family life has assumed a dignity and a significance unknown before.

But it is family life with the mother as centre and chief. Fatherhood had been recognised and exalted before. In ancient Rome it had acquired a legal authority out of all proportion to its real importance. Christianity had definitely repudiated the high pretensions of fatherhood. Our Lord, the tradition was at pains to convince us, had no earthly father. The position of Joseph has always been ambiguous and slightly undignified. The wide general doctrine of the Fatherhood of God has had little practical

influence on the constitution of human society. The paternal authority that exists in the European family to-day is the inheritance of Rome. The reverence for the mother, her exaltation and dignity, her moral position, this we owe to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. In every part of the world where Christianity has taken deep root the position of woman as the mother and the centre of the family has been recognised. But it is only in those countries where the idea has really permeated the inner life of the people—the New World, for instance—where, on fresh soil, old thoughts are nourished and quickened, that she is gradually assuming the place Christ meant her to take.

The day of Jesus and of Mary has been long. Adonis and Aphrodite came before them, and others yet before. Will others follow after ?

My eyes fall again on the little " gardens of Adonis " at His side, the mustard and cress, that the women tend for Him. And they tell their message still. His day is always there. Others may seem to take His place, but each that comes is still the Christ. He will not pass away. This is the Christ of the Ages.

XX

ADONIS

When spring comes in Syria, the scarlet anemones light up the green grass with tongues of flame. They spring from the blood of Adonis, the beautiful boy who was slain in the mountains, and their brilliant joyousness is touched with pain. The water of the Orontes is red each year with his blood. The sea itself, into which it flows, is discoloured for many a mile.

The world was not all joyous before the pale Christ came. Mothers wept for their sons, young maids for their lovers. Perhaps they did not question much the decree of the gods, but their hearts were human. They gazed with blind eyes into the darkness that baffled them, and bowed their heads.

So now on these Syrian coasts which the young Adonis trod, when spring draws near, long bands of mourning women move down to the sea. Aloft they bear the image of their Lord, and with solemn rites commit it to the sea.

Down one of the narrow defiles that leads to the coast, where between high rocks the stream tumbles brawling to the sea, comes the echo of a sad lament. Silver olive-yards are starred with blue iris; oleander

blossoms, rosy-red, are drenched with sparkling spray. Through the sunlit smiling places where the lizards dart, through the cool rock-shadowed haunts where the dove coos through the warm spring day, there moves the long procession of the women who mourn. They carry string instruments in their hands, twanging lyres and little harps, and those who wail the loudest and most wildly hold tambourines high over their heads, and shake them long and fiercely. There are men there too, and little children follow behind, but it is essentially a woman's procession. Tall and straight are these women of Syria, Semitic touched with Greek, and they move with stately step. Loose-limbed, full-breasted, their black hair tossing free, the sunlight glints on their flowing robes of Tyrian blue, and the white veils loose on their shoulders. As they march in rhythmic step together they chant aloud in unison, and beat their bare white breasts, while tears stain the red of their cheeks. Splendid in repose are these women, full of grace and exultation as they move.

They mourn for Adonis, for the beautiful boy who fell in his prime. Slain by no human hand was he, but pierced by the tusk of a boar. Some spirit of vegetation was he—as the scientists say—dying to rise again—some real hero of old who, as the ages pass, has taken on himself the form of a god? What matter to the women what he was, who he once may have been? He is human now, symbolic only of the dead man they love. In their mourning for him they mourn for all the sorrows of their lives, all human

lives. For them he typifies all the beloved dead who have left their hearts to ache, all whom dread Pluto has snatched to the realms below—the father, the son, the lover. They weep because the mysteries of life are great, but those of death are more baffling still, and there is no light anywhere.

Women of all ages, all experiences, follow the funeral procession. There are old women with halting steps. They are lonely, for the son who walked at their side is dead in his prime. There are nursing-mothers with babes at their breasts, and children dragging after them. Gone into the dark is the husband of their lives, strong, protecting. And there are girls, frail and virginal, in whom the young gold still lingers on the rich dark hair. They are blue-robed, these maidens; their eyes are sea-blue, downcast. They mourn for their lovers—dead, perhaps, in the hungering sea, on that wild night when the fisher-boats came back no more.

In front of the procession, the tallest and straightest of the women carry the bier. On it lies, stiff-swathed in shrouding white, the figure of the god. The long hair, gold and curling, streams out in the wind, the face, unstained with blood, looks straight at the sun. They are carrying him to his tomb. A turn in the narrow gorge, and there in the laughing sunlight lies the blue Mediterranean. It croons with joy to itself, its blue is ruffled with tiny waves of foam. This is his sepulchre. What place more fitting for the young limbs to lie, the supple white limbs that battled with the waves, and caressed them in glee? Down to

the white shore the women move, and they stand on the frail shells, bearing the burden that is consecrate to the waves.

As they bend to the waters that murmur all round them, they cry aloud and lower the sacred bier. The young girls fling up their white arms, and together they wail. The beloved Adonis is gone. Out to the sunset he must float on the waves, far out to the sunset, with the red seaweed in his hair.

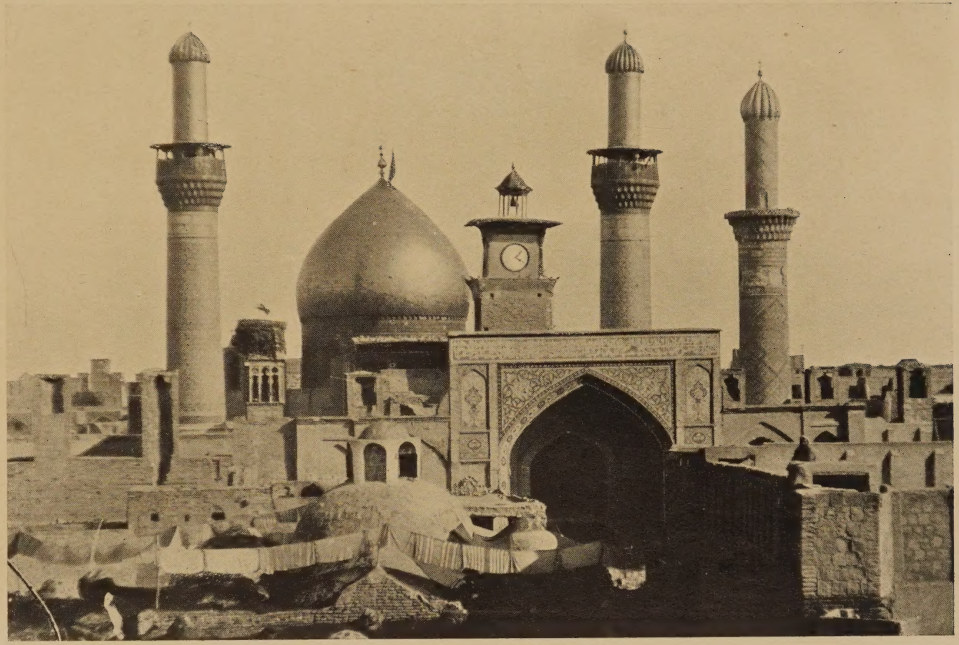
XXI

HUSSEIN

OUTSIDE the wall of the city * there is a flat and open space reserved for the performance of some great religious ceremony. It is enclosed by a cordon of soldiers. Hither the people are hurrying, the townsmen and townswomen, and pilgrims from afar who have come to join in the service. It is a great annual festival of the Shiah Mohammedans. Shiahs from all over the world are gathered together to-day at Kerbela, the cradle of the faith. There are pilgrims from Africa with negro faces, there are Indians, and Persians with the sallow melancholy of the North. There are strange men from Central Asia. Each has his tale to tell, of perils and hardships, of long desert journeys across the sands of Arabia, of tossings in pilgrim-ships in the Gulf, of crossing wind-worn steppes, or the ice-bound mountain ranges of Southern Persia.

All the faces are serious, all bear marks of strain and long fasting. They have waited there for hours, many of them, patient and expectant. Some have

* No particular city is intended. The ceremony takes place in or near every Shiah town, though with very varied accompaniments.



THE TOMB OF HUSSEIN, KERBELA

camped there for days already. They were too poor to find lodging in the *khan*, and have brought their tents with them.

A hot day in June has come to an end at last, and the great heat is passed. As the sun sinks, the crown of rocks outside the enclosed space turns violet, and casts long shadows on the sand. Beside it is a clump of palm trees, dusty with the tramping of countless feet.

This is the month of Muharram, in which the death of Hussein, the son of Ali, is celebrated throughout the Shiah world. The ten days of preparation, of fasting and dancing, of prayer and lamentation are over. To-night the central act of the drama, the death of Hussein, will be celebrated. This is the Shiah Good Friday, the tenth night of Muharram. The great *ta'ziya* (religious drama) will be performed. The sufferings of the blessed martyr and his family will be actually visible to the eyes of the faithful. For this the crowd is gathering outside the city. For this the pilgrims, patient and footsore, have travelled from afar.

Every night for the last ten days the *tekkes* have been crowded, the bands of singers and mourners have moved with their wailing chant from one to the other. To-night the *tekkes*, too small for the gathering of all the faithful, are abandoned for the open air, and the rosy sky of evening.

In the middle of the space there stands a tall square structure of wood. It is decorated with little lamps, artificial flowers, and tinselled hangings. This is

the *Asshur-Khaneh.* It represents the mausoleum of Hussein in the desert. Here he was slain by the army of Yezid, his foe. Clothed in its gaudy trappings, the structure strangely resembles the baldacchino of the Sepulchre at Jerusalem. The ceremony has something of a military character, for was not Hussein slain on the battlefield? Bands play, drums are beaten, in the distance guns are fired.

The crowd has waited patiently for two hours at least. They are sitting in rows on the ground, most of them, but extemporised boxes are reserved for some of the more notable worshippers. It is strangely democratic on the whole; the poorest of the pilgrims get a place as good as the prince. Near the *Asshur-Khaneh* is a rough sort of platform, and on this one person after another mounts at intervals to attempt, now by a pious recital, now by an unconventional exhibition of emotion, to arouse the audience to the proper pitch of spiritual exaltation. Between these recitals there are intervals for relaxation and refreshment. Coffee and cigarettes are handed round, and the extreme tension is relieved, but there is no accompanying sense of festivity. There is a hush and a strained feeling of awe all through the vast expectant audience. One reciter, a soldier from the Turkish army, mounts the platform, and with tears in his eyes, and genuine emotion, describes for the hundredth time the terrible story of Hussein. Every recital draws forth fresh tears, a fresh outburst of pity and weeping. The soldier's effect on the people is particularly quick and genuine. Overwrought as they are

by the long strain of the Passion-week of Islam, they respond like reeds to every breath of wind. He works them up into a pitch of excitement they have not reached before. Beating his breast, he covers his head with handfuls of dust, tears course down his cheeks, and fainting and exhausted he is carried from the scene. This is what appeals to the people. "Hussein, Hussein!" they cry in sympathy, catching up the refrain of his appeal. "*Weh, weh*, Hussein!" (Alas, alas!) and a sobbing rhythmic wail rises up into the still air.

Now the procession from the city, with the actors who are to perform in the *ta'ziya*, is on its way. Banners waving, bands clashing, voices singing in unison, loud and nasal. Aloft they bear the sacred emblems of Shiism, the long lance crowned with a lime to represent the head of Hussein borne on a spike, the horse-shoe in memory of his favourite horse Doldol, the coat of mail, the turban, the spear. The crowd stands motionless in ordered ranks to hail their coming, and as the head of the procession reaches the outer circle, they separate to receive it, and shout with loud salaams the praises of Ali and all the *Imams*. Arrived at the centre, the procession groups itself around the *Asshur-Khaneh*. The principal actors kneel and sit on the ground together on the stage. The *rawza-khwán*, or selected preacher for the day, comes forward now to make his final appeal to the people. If he fails to rouse them now to the highest pitch of excitement and feeling, the last chance is gone. The very salvation of these people depends on the sincerity

and fulness of their lamentation, and it is in his hands to produce the necessary emotion.

His theme, like the theme of the priest at the Festival of the Cross, is the Passion of Hussein. Every detail of the suffering is lingered over, every incident is the cause of a fresh outburst of weeping. Instead of the cross, it is the desert-waste and the parching thirst. Instead of the disciples mourning, it is the children and the holy women. Instead of Mary and Mary Magdalene, it is Omm-Leyla and Zobeidah. Instead of the Mater Dolorosa of Christendom, it is the Mater Dolorosa of Islam. Mary and Fatima suffer the same pangs over their dying sons. The sorrows of both appeal with poignant reality to Eastern people, Christian or Mussulman, to whom the beloved son is the chief goal of life. The women wail over the sorrows of holy Fatima, and clasp their children tighter to their breasts.

Then the joys of Paradise are the preacher's theme, the raptures the faithful may enjoy. But how attain to those glories? The study of the Koran will not effect it. Prayers and fasts are of no avail—the *haj* (pilgrimage) itself is useless for salvation, unless the faithful knows the only way that brings salvation. By none of these things is Paradise won. No, Hussein himself is the Gate of Paradise. For his sake it is open to the believer. In his name it may be won. Hussein sustains the world, in him, in mystic fashion, all things consist. "Pray God, oh Mussulmans," the preacher exhorts them, "to keep you in his love!" But the lamentation of Muharram is the specially ordained

path to that love. To mourn in spirit and in truth on this sacred night, that is the chief duty of the faithful. Those who do not weep, whose hearts are hardened, those to whom this suffering is nothing, they are the lost, the ruined eternally. Weeping is the sign of repentance, of the broken heart.

"Oh, my brothers, my sisters," the preacher implores, himself dissolved in tears, "weep, weep for Hussein—weep hot tears of pity, of repentance, of love. Alas! alas!" and he tears his hair with unfeigned grief, "tear out your hair, ye faithful, beat, beat your hearts—this sorrow kills me, who can behold it unmoved?"

Even for the dead Christ they do not weep like this.

The grief of the people is overpowering, profound. The men sob with the women, the very children cling frightened to each other, and cry for sympathy. If they cannot mourn for the *Imam*, they can weep for the children like themselves, the babes of Hussein who died in the desert of thirst. Sobs and tears drown the preacher's voice. "Ah, praise God!" he murmurs. The appeal has had its effect. The hearts have melted. "Accept, oh Allah," he cries impressively, "accept this tribute of hot tears!"

Then, when the cries have subsided, the *ta'ziya* itself begins. The *ta'ziya* does not vary its theme greatly. There is no complicated plot. Its only object is to impress the sorrows of Hussein on the mind, to give the people the opportunity, necessary in a religion so steeped in mysticism as Shiism, to suffer with

their Lord, to become one with him in that suffering. The whole significance of the *ta'ziya* is a religious one. The literary merits are often considerable, but they are not appreciated. Nobody thinks of literary qualities. They come for worship, not for criticism. They are fellow-sufferers rather than spectators.

The *ta'ziya* is the sacrament of the Shiah faith. It is the sacramental feast of Islam, a feast of pain which all partake together. No attention is paid in these plays to scenery or to studied acting. The actors feel and live their parts, so they have no need of teaching. Its absolute reality for the people is its power over their hearts. The desert is represented by a handful of sand on the platform, the river Tigris by a leather basinful of water. What matter? Hussein is dead. The heart of the people mourns for him. Of no consequence either is the paint and wax of the Christ of Jerusalem. Where love is, all these things count for so little.

The play to-night opens after the death of Hussein. His family are captives of Yezid, his enemy. The cortège with the body of the *Imam*, borne high on camels and horses, appears on the scene. The captives bewail their fate in breaking accents. The caravan has stopped near a well in the desert, and Ibn Said, the cruel general of the hostile forces, has pitched his tent to shelter him from the pitiless sun. All but the captives refresh themselves at the well. They, the women and the children, are dying of thirst. No drop of water is given them—the very babies cry for it.

" Give me drink, drink—only one drop, good Zobeidah, I die of thirst."

" Child, implore me not thus," the sister of the *Imam* replies, the woman who by reason of her strength and courage leads the forlorn little band. " You break my heart, child. Put your trust in God—there is comfort there."

An interval of silence, then the wailing breaks out again. " Only one drop, only one drop." " Come, lean on my breast, child—dry these tears—it kills me to see them."

Humiliating her proud heart, Zobeidah creeps to the general's tent, and begs herself for water for the suffering babes. He refuses with insults, and she hurries back, cursing him, to offer them the hot tears to drink from her own eyes. Here the audience, unable longer to contain its fury against the enemy, howls execrations and oaths at Ibn Said in his tent, some even hurling stones and knives at him. For the parts of the enemy it is often necessary to provide prisoners, no volunteers being forthcoming in spite of the high pay offered. The play ends within the precincts of a Christian monastery. Here Ibn Said has taken refuge from the avenging armies who are pursuing him in the desert. The conversion of one of the monks to Islam is the climax. The heads of the dead prisoners are given in charge of the monks, and when the head of Hussein is raised on the top of a lance, the lips move and the voice of the *Imam* himself is heard. " Who may it be ? " asks the terrified monk. " I am the martyr of Kerbela," the head replies, " my name is Hussein."

" There is no God but God," swears the recanting monk, " and Mohammed is His Prophet, and Ali, the Friend of God."

To the audience the illusion is complete. They have lived themselves through the terrible hours in the desert. They have suffered with their Lord.

Night has come and with it silence. The people do not hurry away. They remain where they are, crouching on the sand under the stars. The lights are put out, and far off from the city comes the familiar cry with its wailing note of pain, " Hussein, Hussein, *weh* Hussein ! "

XXII

JESUS

It is near midnight in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Outside, the Paschal moon, all but full, makes pale the sleeping city. It is a hot night, and long figures wrapped up in their sheepskins lie sleeping outside the little shops. Here and there some late watchers sit together on wooden stools outside a *kahvehji* (coffee-house) playing cards. The cards are littered, white in the moonlight, round glasses of water on the tables. Only a low mutter or a hasty "*Yallah*" under the breath breaks the warm silence of the narrow streets. The peculiar smell of the Eastern town is heavy to-night in Jerusalem, that smell which, more than the sights or the sounds of the East, impels the traveller eastwards again and again. It is full of suggestion, that smell, of sandalwood and spices, of skins drying in the sun, of yellow maize, of coffee, of sherbet, of leather for shoes and saddles. Opening a letter, pulling an old coat out of a drawer, will bring a whiff of it, and when it comes, the traveller must turn his steps eastward once more. He cannot be content at home.

They are all Moslems or Jews, these sleepers and card-players in the streets, for all the Christians of the

city are in the church. It is the night of Good Friday, the night of the Festival of the Cross. A *baksheesh* to Turkish soldiers has secured us entry, and after long waiting we are allowed a place in the Chapel of Calvary. We stand in a little recess off the chapel, and look down from the gallery at one side on to the crowd in the church below. It is a huge and close-pressed crowd that waits down there. So dense is it that there is literally not standing room for all, but the quiet order is such that many boys and younger men stand on the shoulders of the bigger men, and clasp the great columns to support themselves. Children are held high in their parents' arms, for the white-robed mothers of Jerusalem are a prominent feature among the soberer-clad men.

This crowd is gathered from all over the world. Christians from the cold North are there—the pilgrim from Russia, staff in hand, his rough-hewn features aflame with love. Christians from the South—black priests from Abyssinia, yellow Copts from Egypt; Christians from the East—the ancient Churches of Syria, of Armenia, of Chaldæa; Christians from the far West too—English, Americans, Protestants and Catholics both. The great crowd breathes together in common expectation. Flickering oil lamps, high up on the walls, light up dimly the white faces and the brown. The faces are strained with excitement and emotion, for the days of Holy Week, with their multiplicity of services and masses, are telling on the nerves of the pilgrims, and there are black lines of weariness on the faces.

All eyes are fastened on the Chapel of Calvary with its altar ablaze with lights, for there the holy cross, the centre of Good Friday's Festival, is to be revealed. A curtain is drawn back, and there it stands. It is a solid wooden cross, roughly hewn and simple. The figure which is nailed to it is life-size. It is made of wax. The head is bowed—only the scarlet lips show crudely from below. The hair, black and coarse, hangs heavily round the shoulders. From the holes pierced in the feet and hands, drops of blood, realistically painted, stain the wax. *Ecce Homo.*

For a long minute the figure on the cross confronts the people, dumb, staring, blank. The silence of passionate, tremulous emotion falls on the crowd. Then, in the distance, long-drawn *misereres* sound, muffled, and a sigh of relief, of half-smothered exultation, escapes from a thousand lips. Instinctively the white-robed women hold out their hands to the cross. Cries break out; involuntarily, tearful and long-drawn yearning sobs shake the overwrought frames. Once a nervous woman, worn out with long fasting, laughs hysterically, and then wails, weeping.

They love the crucified Jesus, these simple people, and they weep for His sufferings. A wave of feeling rushes over them, one and all, of pity, of devotion. He was so lovable, so tender, and He suffered so. Son of God He was, but it is the Man they love, not the God.

Men hold the children high over their heads that they may see Him on the cross, so white and pierced. Instinctively the great crowd presses nearer,

closer yet. What matter that the figure is rude, inartistic, that the bloodstains are of paint, scarlet, painfully grotesque ? Eyes that are blinded with love see nothing of that. Is it not the cross of Jesus that stands there, and the hands stretched out to help, are they not the Lord's ? Symbol of the world's sorrow, refuge for aching hearts, answer to the questions that baffle, oh, cross of Jesus, aloft, alone, let them weep for thee, these hearts that love, that suffer. He is crucified. " Behold the Man." The heat, the crowd, the tawdriness, fade away, the long lines of monks and priests, the bishops with the little glittering eyes and the thin hard lips, the barbaric splendour of the Eastern Church. In the presence of the cross and the love they have vanished. They grate and displease no more.

And then the glamour fades. The Church, with its blundering hand, has stepped in. It must try to interpret the love, explain the meaning of the cross. It fails ; it will always fail. It is a French priest who speaks for the Church to-day. First in Arabic, then in French, he tells, in realistic strain, the story of the cross. The physical suffering is his theme—the agony, the bloody sweat, the thirst, the wounds, the crown of thorns, the scourge with its iron thong—the appeal is purely materialistic. No word of the spiritual loneliness is here, of the struggle of the moral nature, of the mystery of the suffering. The Church is appealing to the lowest, to the animal horror of physical pain. On and on the loud voice labours, piling on the agony, working up the feelings of the people. And the wondrous story,

in the hand of the blundering Church, has become a melodrama. Judas the villain, Jesus the hero, play the accustomed parts. The crowd listens with stolid patience, with forced interest. The yearning rapture, the pure emotion, with which they contemplated the cross, has gone. The Church has made the story vulgar. The priceless moment is lost.

The sermon is over, and now to the accompaniment of muffled chants, the sacred drama, the descent from the cross, is acted before the people. Two black-robed monks, who stand on either side of the cross, proceed to take the body down. With dramatic gestures they draw the nails from the stiff feet, from the outstretched hands. One of them stands on the altar-step behind and unties the heavy cords that support the body. Reverently, in breathless silence, the stiff figure is lifted down from the cross, and laid full length upon the bier. Stark and stained with blood it lies. A splendid pall, white, gold-embroidered, is flung over it. Only the head with its crown of thorns, its matted hair, its red-rimmed eyelids, is left uncovered. Borne aloft on the shoulders of the monks, it is carried down from the Chapel of Calvary into the body of the church. There it meets the long procession waiting to escort it. In front march the acolytes, cassocked in scarlet and lace, swinging high and proudly the delicate golden censers. Then the long line of monks, the heavy ropes swaying at their sides, heads bent and dolefully chanting. "*Miserere Domine,*" they wail, and the crowd takes up the sad lament. "*Miserere Domine,*" they cry together, and as

they chant, they weep for sympathy. Behind the monks are the priests, their vestments sober in harmony with the season ; and then the bishops, stiff in golden copes and jewelled mitres. The last of them, one more gorgeous than them all, and preceded by a cross, carries in his hands, stretched out before him, the sacred emblems of the faith. The crown of thorns is there, the rusty nails that pierced the hands, the coarse cloths.

Round the vast church the procession moves, in and out of the ancient columns, past the little chapels of the African Churches, poor and bare, where black priests tend the scanty lamps, past the barbaric splendour of the Armenian chapel, where ostrich eggs, set in gold, hang over the blazing altar, pausing before the sanctuary of the Greeks, where jewelled eikons of vast antiquity look down as they have looked down on the festival of the Cross for more than a thousand years.

Under the vast dome in the centre of the church is the great *baldacchino* that stands over the Sepulchre itself. It is of marble and yellow plaster, gaudily decorated with pictures, lithographs, lamps and candles, beads and flowers. Through the openings in its painted sides bright lights shine. Inside a single marble slab marks the tomb of the Lord. Fresh flowers, sweet and fragrant, are laid around it, and over them hang priceless lamps of chastest workmanship.

This is the goal. Here, into the Sepulchre, the procession winds its mournful way. The supreme moment has come. Wide are flung the doors of the *baldacchino*,

and the weeping people fall on their knees. Acolytes and monks divide, and between them, borne aloft, the body of the Lord is carried to its rest. All is over. The multitude shivers, recoils with emotion, with repulsion, from the sight, from the suffering.

Then there is a long, long sigh of relief. "It is finished."

THE END

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